ENTERTAINMENT / F1
Lea Salonga on Broadway: Having fun as Fantine off and on stage

SPORTS / A25
Marquez must fight Pacquiao first–WBC

BUSINESS / B1
Pagcor to set up $20B Las Vegas-style gambling complex on Manila Bay reclaimed area

NEWS / A2
GMA wants to end hunger in six months

Pinoys warned against eating 'dying' species

DELICIOUS, BUT THESE numbers are definitely declining.

The Philippine chapter of the WWF, the global conservation organization, has listed shark fin arsenal, turtle soup and Chilean sea bass as

PHOTOS A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, March 22, 2007 ** 6 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 104 P18 website: www.inquirer.com

Iraqi insurgents detonate car bomb with 2 kids in it

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—INSURGENTS DETONATED a car bomb with two children in it after using the children as decoys to get through a military checkpoint in Baghdad, a US general said Tuesday.

Speaking at a news briefing at the Pentagon, Maj. Gen. Michael Barbero, deputy director for regional operations at the Pentagon's Joint Staff,

IRAQI A6

VIOLATED LANDSCAPE. Abstract art? Botched paint job? A fence defaced by time and the elements? What is it? It's poster after poster of Team Unity's Senate bet Mike Defensor in the heart of downtown Tagbilaran City in Bohol. Splashed wall to wall on galvanized iron sheeting, the "mural" is still up there two weeks after the administration candidates' campaign. Attention, Comelec!

More pork graft exposed

CORRUPTION CASES

Malacañang rejects general's ₱21-M offer

THUMBS BUT NO THUMBS.

In a rare move, Malacañang yesterday flatly rejected the offer of a retired Armed Forces comptroller to surrender to the government almost P21 million worth of assets in exchange for the dropping of graft charges filed against him and his family.

"We would like to state up front there are no negotiations taking place involving the government on this matter, and we shall let the law take its course," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement, referring to the suspension order of Lt. Gen. Jacinto Ligot.

"We owe it to our soldiers and the people to act in their supreme interest, and there can be no bargain in this regard," said Bunye, the spokesperson of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ligot was charged in the Sandiganbayan in 2005 for allegedly amassing P135-20 million in ill-gotten wealth.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio, one of those to whom Ligot's offer was addressed, yesterday said he found it "unacceptable" in view of the total value of questionable assets cited in the cases against the Ligots.

Asked by the Inquirer in a phone interview if he found the offered amount too small, Villa-Ignacio replied in the affirmative.

"If it will be just that paltry amount, we don't want to give the impression that it's very easy to reach a settlement," he said in a mix of Filipino and English.

Villa-Ignacio said his office had long adopted a "set of policies" for defendants considering a plea bargain:

+ "Complete restitution of [the defendant's] civil liabilities" or payment using "all real and personal properties acquired by him over and above his legiti-

MALACAÑANG A8

WAITING FOR GMA. Hadji Salimah Sariputlah (below) and other women in the Muslim village of Barangay 646, Pulanca Sur Miguel, Manila, wait for Ms Arroyo to emerge from a meeting with their barangay officials.

PCs at ₱217,500 each for Luzon IT projects

By Volt Contreras

DUBIOUS PORK BARREL EXPENDITURES HAVE gone techie.

A civil society report on the use of congressional pork barrel uncovered at least six information technology (IT) projects in Luzon in which basic, "unbranded" personal computers installed in public schools were allegedly bought at P217,500 each.

An unbranded PC with licensed software would normally cost just around P50,000 at the most, noted the first installment of "PDAF Watch," an initiative of the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (Code-NGO).

The "overpriced" IT projects were found in Metro Manila, Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon.

Pork barrel, a source of kickbacks, is a fund appropriated to the national budget to help lawmakers curry favor with voters by identifying the projects that will be funded by their pork barrel allowances.

PDAF, or Priority Development Assistance Fund, is the pork barrel allocated to members of the House of Representatives and senators.

It is mainly used for projects on a menu set by the Department of Budget and Management, such as health care and education. Congressional Allocation (CA), also a pork barrel, is mainly for infras-

MORE A11

DepEd: Test for HS seniors shows aptitude for tech-voc

By Jerry E. Esplanada

MORE THAN HALF OF THE 1.3 MILLION senior high school students who took the National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) on Jan. 17 showed a high aptitude for technical-vocational courses, the Department of Education (DepEd) said yesterday.

"The results validate our decision to really put stress on our technical-vocational programs," Education Secretary Jesli Lapus told a news conference.

This year marks the first time that the NCAE was administered for graduating high school students.

The NCAE, Lapus said, is "not like the old National College Entrance Examination or NCEE which was used solely as basis for admission to college. The NCAE is a guide for students so that they will

DEPED A6

'Satur not covered by amnesty, he didn't apply'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Leila B. Salaverria

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY SAID REP. Satur Ocampo was not covered by any amnesty proclamation, because he had not applied for it—but the militant lawmaker made it clear he was not asking for any in the first place.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the Bayan Muna party-list representative could have been spared of the murder charges he was now facing if only he had availed of the amnesty declarations made by former Presidents Corazon Aquino in 1987 and Fidel V. Ramos in the 1990s.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez agreed, saying that "if the President grants amnesty, you must apply." Gonzalez also said an application must be accompanied by an admission that one had committed a crime.

All that seemed academic.

In an interview with the Inquirer yesterday, Ocampo said he never applied for amnesty because he had not committed any crime.

"I have squarely faced the charges against me. This is the third time that I am being accused of alleged crimes committed during the Marcos dictatorship," he said.

Ocampo, now detained at the Manila Police Department, is facing charges of multiple murder in a Leyte court for the alleged

SATUR A6

'The issue should not be Delgados vs Gonzalezes'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE MURDER OF A BUSINESSMAN ON March 10 is now pitting two prominent, wealthy families in a sad saga.

And the Gonzalez side of the tragedy (but belief) the Delgado-Gonzalez families is crying foul after some newspaper reports implicated one of its own in the cold-blooded killing of Federico "Rico" Chanliao Delgado.

The accusation shocked the Gonzalez family, and Linda's sister, Maria Rosario "Baby" Gonzalez-Meyer, spoke to the Inquirer on Monday night to denounce the newspaper report and categorically deny the involvement of her brother and family in the murder.

"We have kept our silence but today I must say they have gone too far. The truth must come out," she said.

"I am one with the Delgados in wanting to resolve this horrible murder. The issue should not be Delgados versus Gonzalezes. The issue here is there are two murderers who are at large and we are spinning our

wheel with baseless accusations when my brother, who is trying to recover from a depression, has been dragged [into this crime] until he's not even here to defend himself," Ruby lamented, trying to fight back tears.

Delgado, son of shipping magnate Francisco "Paco" Delgado, was found dead in his apartment at the family-owned Mayflower Building on Leon Guinto Street in Malate, Manila. His account companion reported two men attacked her and Delga-

THE ISSUE A11

RUBY GONZALEZ-MEYER: We have kept our silence but today they have gone too far.

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MEGALOTTO 6/45
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Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Sunrise and Sunset: Luzon will have mostly sunny days with scattered rainshowers. Visayas and Eastern Mindanao will have mostly sunny days with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of Mindanao will have cloudy skies with occasional rains.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Cebu/Mactan	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy
Dagupan	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Surigao	Cloudy with Rains
Clark/Subic	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Pagadian	Cloudy with Rains
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Catbalogan	Partly Cloudy	Ozamiz	Cloudy with Rains

GMA wants hunger over in 6 months

By Michael Lim Ubac

MALACAÑANG SAID IT would lower prices of some basic commodities by refilling the stocks of rolling stores and village pharmacies dubbed "Botika ng Mana" as part of an intensified drive to wipe out hunger in six months.

At his regular press briefing, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday that President Arroyo had ordered to quarterly Committee Chair Domingo Siaguinlay, Health Sec. Francisco Duque III and heads of other relevant departments to make a shot at the hunger and poverty level in the next six months.

The first quarter 2007 Social Weather Station (SWS) survey conducted from Feb. 24 to 27 showed that about a fifth of all families, or an estimated 3.4 million households nationwide, has experienced involuntary hunger at least once in the past three months.

The survey showed the problem of hunger worsened in Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon, and overall remained at the record-high 19 percent reached last November.

"President Arroyo ordered the review of all anti-poverty programs," Ermita said, warning concerned officials to shape up or be ready to step out after six months.

Ermita also warned the middle class against taking advantage of the selling items which are depleted in urban areas and poor barangays across the country.

Ermita said Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo has set a meeting on Tuesday with the national anti-poverty council, national anti-poverty commissions and the departments of agriculture and health "precisely as orders of President Arroyo to look closely as our anti-poverty program."

"If within six months the (members of people that can't break away from the threshold of poverty have) changed at all, the anti-poverty programs must be intensified," he said.

Malacañang earlier relied on the public to cut down on tooting, smoking, drinking and other luxuries to save money for basic needs.

Meanwhile, an official spearheading the implementation of the government's Hunger Mitigation Program (HMP) blamed the opposition in the last debate for their poor performance.

National Nutrition Council executive director Maria Bernadette Flores told the Inquirer yesterday the implementation of the food for School Program, a component of the HMP, had been suspended because of realignments and delays in the passage of the second budget and the supplemental budget for 2007.

Flores said the Food for School Program benefited 292,237 public grade school and pre-school children and 122,203 day care pupils and their families from June-December 2006. Under the program, pupils get to bring home a kilo of rice every day.

Increasing this year, the program had benefited. There has also to distribute. "Not only the students were affected, but also their families," Flores said.

Senate finance committee chair Franklin Drilon said vice chair Edgardo Angara had scrapped the P1.8 billion Food for School Program as a "ruse" and just another playby "electioneering."

HUNGER STRIKE

Soledad Delgaccio, one of the hunger-striking farmers from Negros, stays bravely after she was rushed to the hospital on the 12th day of their fast. She and several other farmers have been on hunger strike in front of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Quezon City to demand their demand to be installed in the land awarded to them under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. (JOEY ARANAS)

Chavit, Mike D deny bribe claim

By Cynthia D. Balana

TEJAS UNITY SENIORITAL CANDIdates Mike Defensor and Luis "Chavit" Singson yesterday denied having bribed a former beauty queen and her brother to file money laundering charges against detained president Joseph Estrada last year.

Defensor, however, admitted that he met Shamcey Supsup at the Shangri-La Hotel in Ortigas Center, Pasig City last year to discuss a different case.

He said he had been meeting with Shamcey, and even went to Los Angeles to see her and discuss "highly confidential" matters but stressed these were not related to the Estrada case.

Defensor said it was Shamcey who told him about her daughter Joelle's case against the former president.

"That is a personal case, one filed against ELPIL. It's not a public case and it doesn't involve government funds. We have nothing to do with it," he added.

Joelle, a former beauty queen, had accused Estrada of using her bank account to launder huge amounts of money in connivance with senior officials of San Miguel Corp. and former Comelec Chairman Benjamin Abalos.

Eric Hilarides, the elder Delaco claimed that Defensor paid for his and daughter Joelle's round-trip plane tickets to the Philippines and even gave them shopping money after they agreed to file money laundering charges against Estrada.

Singson and Shamcey's sudden turnaround could be part of a planned set-up to destroy the administration and its Team Unity senatorial candidates.

Asked how Estrada could have used Joelle's account, Singson said Estrada received the former beauty queen.

"Ang pera ay nasa kanya (Joelle), ala ang kanyad sa akin (My only participation is that they approached me)," he said, referring to the meeting wherein Pilapil and her daughter showed Defensor that Estrada used Joelle's bank account to launder money.

"Alam ko nalilipasan (just as) Erap (What I know is that Erap received her)," Singson said of Joelle. "Ginong pera niya (just days ago his) Ginyan ng P2 million. Ang nice nga ang nangyari sa kanila (just ang di ko sa alam (Unwarranted but very much as he gave her P2 million. But whatever happened between them I don't know)." With reports from Leila B. Salaverria

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DENR WARNING

Las Piñas ground water contaminated

By TJ Burgonio

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY ANGELO Reyes yesterday banned the importation and use of Trichloroethylene (TCE) and advised Las Piñas residents against drinking from groundwater after the water from a former factory site in the city was found to be "potentially" contaminated with the chemical.

TCE, is a chemical used in the production of polyvinyl chloride, flame retardants and in aerosols and used as an industrial solvent, is a volatile compound that can cause cancer.

"We are making the announcement that the groundwater in Las Piñas is probably contaminated with TCE ... to alert the public. They should stop drinking groundwaters. We don't believe in keeping bad news away from the public," Reyes said in a press briefing.

He also said that he was banning the importation, use and sale of the chemical. There are at least 20 local and foreign companies that import this chemical for the manufacture of electrical and electronic parts, footwear, textile, adhesives, among others.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources disclosed that Philips Corp. had conducted preliminary tests of the groundwater in its 10-hectare former factory site in Pamplona last last year, and found that "potentially contaminated" with TCE.

The downstairs company which shut down the factory in 1998 but was slow to develop the site with a local real estate firm, recently relayed the results of its tests on the 2000s that it was the origin of the chemical but not been ascertained.

The DENR also took groundwater samples from the site and had those tested by the EPA labs in the former Clark Air Field in Pampanga, which in turn sent them to its affiliate in the United States. The development is still waiting for the results.

"It's better that we take pro-active stance, rather than be sorry later," Ely Quano, director of the Environmental Management Bureau, said in an interview.

In the same briefing, Las Piñas City Mayor Imelda Aguilar said the city government had not received any report of ailments in the area.

Benjamin Reyes of Maynilad, the water company serving Pamplona, said it would supply potable water to the residents complaining its families in the area.

"To the people in Las Piñas, rest assured we will provide potable water, enough water for the affected areas of Las Piñas," he said.

Philippine representative Wenceslao Sebig, who flew in this week from Hong Kong, indicated that their company would "stand shoulder to shoulder with the government to resolve the issue."

"What should be highlighted here is that the environment it in bad shape. Our groundwater is possibly contaminated because of garbage being dispose irresponsibly. Our air is polluted. Pls. have to take care of the environment," Reyes said.

Vindication, Palace says of CHR report

By Michael Lim Ubac

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY SAID IT WELCOMED the results of the face-finding inquiry of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) clearing retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and other military men of complicity in most of the political killings blamed on state security forces.

Although Gonzalez had yet to be officially notified of the findings yesterday, he said that "it somehow proves" what the Palace had been saying all along that soldiers were not murderers.

"I'm glad such a document has been exposed by [for] a commissioner of a CHR," he said.

Gonzalez said the government must learn an independent body such as the CHR, that "let this be a sample for those who wishes [to] of charge against anybody especially those in government [and] against members of the armed forces and the police."

The findings of the Makabayang-control Hyle Commission had caused Palparan as the "prime suspect" in the killings.

Immigration vows probe of detainees' complaints

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION yesterday promised to look into the complaints of some 150 foreigners detained at its three-building detention facility in Bicutan, Taguig City.

Though he denied that at least two detainees were on an already week-long hunger strike, jail warden Porfiro Pastor yesterday admitted many of the detainees have been complaining about their crowded cells, the lack of health personnel in the center and the snail-paced proceedings of their cases, including one case that has been pending for nine years.

Immigration officials reportedly held a meeting yesterday afternoon to talk about the problems in their detention facility which a reported-

ly the subject of various diplomatic notes to the government.

The German ambassador had personally visited the facility on Monday. A press spokesman later confirmed that one of its citizens was on a hunger strike and had complained of poor conditions.

Facility supervisor Henry Ribbon also confirmed that the detainees had been alarmed by the death on Monday of Chinese national Li Gang Wu. A report showed to the Bicutan industrial fire complement of difficulty in breathing on Saturday afternoon. He was brought to the Dispital ng Muntok where he died two days later, reportedly of a heart-related illness.

The detainees felt the victim had not been given proper medical attention after a fall that resulted in a leg fracture a few weeks ago.

Ribbon said he invited to the center Monday afternoon where he heard of optimism for a fair and held a dialogue with the detainees. He said they told him their concerns and he promised to try to address them. Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

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<<< MESSAGES >>>

Congratulations to Prime Asia's GEM and tourism-promotion arm, on another success-ful staging of the Asia's Gaming and Entertainment – Leisure Expo Manila.

The Asia's GEM 2007 presents the Philippines to the world as an ideal place for investments, particularly in tourism and gaming at a time we believe that our country is on the brightest gateway as a haven for both foreign travelers and investors alike.

The Conference likewise complements PAGCOR's efforts to change the face of the Filipino people and help uplift the economy as it opens up opportunities for the creation of more jobs.

Gaming as an entertainment component of our gaming ambiance is the international source market, and this event would certainly aid PAGCOR in the realization of its noble goals by attracting more foreign investors to the country.

The party on last year, this occasion provides various industry leaders the golden chance to exchange valuable ideas as to the dynamic link between tourism and gaming.

On behalf of PAGCOR, we commend our hard-working and women who toiled to make the second staging of Asia's GEM's resounding success.

Naturally raising wheat,

EFRAIM C. GENUINO
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, PAGCOR
Interim Chairman, Euro-Asian Cooperation Gaming

We take great pleasure in greeting the participants of this year's Gaming and Entertainment Philippines Expo.

This year's exhibition brings together industry leaders, investors and entrepreneurs engaged in the gaming, entertainment and leisure business.

Gatherings of foreign and local visitors in events such as this support the government's continuous efforts to promote the country as a premier for Marketing, incentives, conventions and exhibition (MICE).

We welcome our guests to experience our culture and the arts, learn our history, admire our heritage destinations, behold our unique tropical landscapes, enjoy exciting nightlife activities, dwell in luxurious hotels and resorts and whip in bargain malls and town centers in one of the most beautiful city of it kind to exist in the Asia-Pacific region.

Our best wishes and congratulations to the organizers for a fruitful and successful event.

Respectfully,

JOSEPH H. DURANO
Secretary, Department of Tourism

This year 2007 is when the Philippine amusement and gaming corporation will officially look forward to doubling the size of its multi-casino gaming as PAGCOR's franchise is extended and its powers expanded.

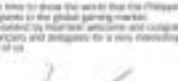
It is timely that the 2nd Asia's Gaming Expo Manila is bringing the local casino gaming industry to a new level of promoting tourism and more foreign investors in the country through the improvements the organizers have made in this year's show.

This is now our time to show the world that the Philippines is an ace with the giants in the global gaming market.

I would like to extend my most sincere welcome and congratulations to the organizers and delegates for a very interesting conference ahead of us.

Mabuhay!

RANDY "BOYOY" A. FRANCISCO
President & Chief Operating Officer, PAGCOR



The Philippines Charity Sweepstakes Office joins Asia's GEM and PAGCOR in welcoming our foreign delegates as well as our local participants to this major international gaming tourism and entertainment exposition.

PCSO, the sole licensing agency for lottery and lottery operations in the Philippines, has consistently been striving to share in pursuing and institutionalizing strategic reforms essential in strengthening the Philippine gaming market.

Being responsible, PCSO recognizes the vital role in supporting the government's efforts to alleviate poverty, uplift the economy, and generate employment.

Our capacity to provide a significant contribution to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's social reform agenda rests on our ability to maximize and sustain our lotto sweepstakes, STL and keno operations to meet world standards.

Asia's GEM provides PCSO with the venue for acquiring global trends and the latest technological system in the most advanced gaming economies. It opens opportunities for acquiring fresh insights for integrating gaming and tourism in the country, best suited to our environment, while providing livelihood and employment for thousands of Filipinos.

We salute the organizers of the 2nd Asia's GEM for bringing together an impressive roster of luminaries composed of global investors and global market players.

Our warmest congratulations to the 2nd Asia's GEM-International Gaming and Entertainment Exposition!

EDGARDO C. URIARTE
General Manager, PCSO

PAGCOR Chairman and CEO Efraim C. Genuino (center) stands with the founding members of the Euro-Asian Cooperation on Gaming, from left: Herman Ng (Imari), Dianne Ho (Excelsior De Gran De Macao), Jack Lam (Pol. Travel and Amusement Ltd.), Yang Su Seok, Grand Korean, Park Sung Soo (Grand Korea), Bok Man Park (Parkwood Inc.), Rocky Ho (KERI), Yoon Boyd (International Gaming Services), Melvin Wilkinson (Club Hotel Lucky), Jack Boren (Regent Hotel Management), Upalat Pachaiyachatan (Royal Crown Hospitality), Chong Chiu Wo Samuel (Century Legend Holdings), David Ortiz (Consultancy) and PAGCOR President and COO Rafael "Butch" Francisco.

Asia's Gaming & Entertainment + Leisure Expo Manila 2007

Exploring new avenues for growth and development

The Who's Who in international gaming, entertainment and tourism set in Manila for the next few days to participate in one of the biggest and most anticipated events this year – the Asia's Gaming and Entertainment – Leisure Expo Manila 2007 (Asia's GEM 2007).

Presented by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) and the Euro-Asian Cooperation on Gaming (ECG), the event gathers under one roof casinos operators, hotel chains, investors, manufacturers and suppliers from around the world to organize up to the Asian Gaming and Tourism Investment Forum.

Only in its second year, the Asia's GEM has already established itself as a major player in the international gaming and tourism trade market. It was conceptualized by PAGCOR Chairman and CEO Efraim C. Genuino when he envisioned making the Philippines a major tourist destination in the booming small – medium-sized and exclusive gaming suppliers and premium travel-support opportunities for business managers with the ability to attend major conventions.

"To be able to host an international event of this magnitude in itself is already a marvelous achievement, but to be able to build on what we started last year and expand it further, is even more outstanding. That is why we are doubly proud to see this event unfolding again this year," Genuino said in his welcome remarks.

During the inaugural press conference, the Asia's GEM broke the participations of 110 companies from various countries such as the Philippines, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Cyprus, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Macau, the Netherlands, Panama, Poland, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, and Singapore. A welcomed more than 3,000 international and local trade visitors for this year, a hopes to double that number.

The first Asia's GEM was also a landmark occasion as it served as the catalyst for the creation of the Euro-Asian Cooperation on Gaming (ECG). Associations, which gathers gaming industry leaders from Asia and Europe to foster greater cooperation and mutual support among casino operators, gamers and investors.

"The Asia's GEM is a perfect opportunity to promote synergy between gaming and tourism, the event's theme. Forging success – the nature of human gaming," pertaining to the ability of various cultures to adapt to gaming throughout history, Genuino said.

The Expo, being held on March 22-23 at the World Trade Center, features the latest in gaming equipment, technology, gaming related products and services, as Casino Clubs, golf clubs, disaster and new developments, and entertainment providers and vendors.

Another most exciting the Asia's GEM is its impressive line-up of international gaming luminaries who spoke during the Gaming and Investment Conference held in partnership at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila.

Among the speakers were Incidentally Mr. Rafael "Butch" Francisco, Director of PAGCOR on who has over 30 years experience in the casino business. He is also concurrently the executive director of Asia's Gaming and Entertainment Corporation Ltd and The Top Property Development Ltd.

Another speaker was Atty. Lenonito Chan, the CEO of Wynnes Love. He is also the chairman of the Casino Corporation. An occasion, which is active in lobbying for major casino projects in Macau, Malaysia, and CEO Michael Bonnitzer, Macau Hotels, Hotels Asia's leading casino consultancies, with over 5,000 employees and the top ranking in both table games and slot operations in the former Soviet Union.

On the other hand, Richard Corbin Chairman and CEO Asia every chairman of Singapore Gambling Industry leaders in addition to Genuino and controlled by the Dutch government.

Returning as the cause of speakers were MGM Gaming International Vice-president Jim Murren, managing director of Sebastian Sakr and Wynn Resorts Managing Director Jack Boren, who is also co-chairman of Genting Malaysia Berhad. Genting Malaysia Berhad is the leading tourism and leisure group in Malaysia. The event is to be held on 7:30 p.m. today at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila.

The caliber of speakers at the Congress is truly awe-inspiring. Though only in its second year, the Congress has already won the nod of approval of its movers and shakers. Genuino, a veteran in the gaming industry, has established and certainly the reputation of Asia's GEM as the Asia Pacific region's premier international gaming event, and participants within and from the future of gaming is in Asia," said Genuino.

However, the Asia's GEM is not just about business. A part of its objectives is the promotion of the Philippines as an ideal tourism and investment destination.

"Asia's GEM serves to open doors to delegates to explore the Philippines and providing job opportunities in the entertainment and recreational gaming and leisure sectors in Filipinos. Our guest is thanks to the Philippines' rich culture and heritage, its natural scenery and social development," explained Tuna Genuino, Asian Gold and Entertainment, Inc. president and Asia's GEM chairperson.

PAGCOR banks on Entertainment City to make Philippine tourism globally competitive

Senator Richard Gordon and Chairman Genuino view the replica of the Entertainment City model.

From its unique geographical location in the natural beauty and warm, hospitable people – the Philippines has been colonized by many as a country that has something special to offer.

And for a good reason because in its scenic tropical beach setting by its colorful customs and traditions – Asia's Pearl of the Orient Seas is an ideal place for business and has consistently been voted as "most ergonomic" destination by travelers and vacationers from around the world.

When it comes to thrills and excitement, however, the "glitz and the glamour" of the local casino gaming and entertainment industry is the country's most compelling attraction and pulling power. Gaming is a big business in the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR).

As early as 2001, PAGCOR Chairman and CEO Efraim C. Genuino envisioned transforming the Philippines into a premier gaming and entertainment destination and a global mindset and a Filipino heart."

Taking off from the Las Vegas and other gaming capitals of the world, where the entertainment industry takes precedence over casino gaming as a source of generating revenues, PAGCOR began to re-invent its casinos, not only to provide proper gaming but world-class total entertainment as well.

Gaming and non-gaming as a dual package has become an effective vehicle for promoting tourism and investments. This is why our corporation has embarked on a paradigm shift from being a mere casino operator to a provider of world-class entertainment," Genuino said.

At present, the biggest project made by PAGCOR investor seeking this area is the development of the Entertainment City project. The proposed Entertainment City project is known as Manila Bay.

The proposed Entertainment City, which is being developed for potential investors during the 2nd Asia's Gaming and Entertainment – Leisure Expo Manila (Asia's GEM) 2007 being held at the World Trade Center Manila on March 22-23, 2007, is a massive, fully integrated entertainment and leisure complex offering amusements, fun, thrill and excitement for people of all ages.

Although designed to be a global City of the Future, it will reflect the best of the natural charm, unique culture and warm hospitality of the Filipinos.

The Entertainment City is set to rise on a 15-hectare area of reclaimed land between Roxas Boulevard and the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) complex.

It will be divided into special-use areas which will feature five-star theme hotels, amusement parks, educational and cultural complexes, shopping malls, a commercial district, a tourist harbor, waterways, convention centers, world-class entertainment, hotels, leisure and business facilities, and other tourist-oriented developments, with over 5,000 employees and the top ranking in both table games and slot operations in the former Soviet Union.

On the other hand, Richard Corbin Chairman and CEO Asia every chairman of Singapore Gambling Industry leaders in addition to Genuino and controlled by the Dutch government.

Returning as the cause of speakers were MGM Gaming International Vice-president Jim Murren, managing director of Sebastian Sakr and Wynn Resorts Managing Director Jack Boren, who is also co-chairman of Genting Malaysia Berhad. Genting Malaysia Berhad is the leading tourism and leisure group in Malaysia. The event is to be held on 7:30 p.m. today at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila.

The caliber of speakers at the Congress is truly awe-inspiring. Though only in its second year, the Congress has already won the nod of approval of its movers and shakers. Genuino, a veteran in the gaming industry, has established and certainly the reputation of Asia's GEM as the Asia Pacific region's premier international gaming event, and participants within and from the future of gaming is in Asia," said Genuino.

However, the Asia's GEM is not just about business. A part of its objectives is the promotion of the Philippines as an ideal tourism and investment destination.

"Asia's GEM serves to open doors to delegates to explore the Philippines and providing job opportunities in the entertainment and recreational gaming and leisure sectors in Filipinos. Our guest is thanks to the Philippines' rich culture and heritage, its natural scenery and social development," explained Tuna Genuino, Asian Gold and Entertainment, Inc. president and Asia's GEM chairperson.

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A TALE OF TWO AQUINOS

Kris a better bet, says her Tita Tessie

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

TEAM UNITY SENATORIAL CANDIDATE TESSIE Aquino Oreta would have gladly abandoned her senatorial bid if it was her niece, television host Kris Aquino, and not her nephew, Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III who was running.

"If Kris wanted to run in the senate, I will not run. She is super, super popular. Kris is at the height of her popularity. Sa edad, (should I run?)" said Oreta in an interview with the inquirer.

Despite her "colorful love life," "Kris will be a good politician if she puts her mind and mettle into it," Oreta said.

"Kris is a super, super intelligent girl, do not underestimate her. She will be very, very good if she takes politics seriously," said Oreta. "She should have come out as a boy and she would have been her father's son."

It is had previously announced her plan to run in the 2013 elections and she preferred the senate over the senate.

Oreta was supposed to run under the United Opposition ticket being fanned by jailed President Joseph Estrada. But Oreta was spinned out of the ranks of the opposition groups under the Genuine Opposition which adopted Aquino, a member of the Liberal Party-Drilon wing, as its candidate. Although Oreta and her nephew remained in good terms, it was obvious that the aunt was still smarting from the incident.

Oreta still remembered how her long-time friend, Estrada, could not say "straight out" that the merger of the opposition would mean only one Aquino would run in the common slate.

"He (Estrada) told me that Noynoy and I should talk. But I thought why do we have to talk when he could decide it for himself. So I told him (Estrada) that (he) make the decision easier for him and just leave," said Oreta.

Oreta related that the "nearly fainted" with what Aquino told her in one of their phone conversations. "When I told him to go to Tessy because Erap is the recognized opposition leader, he said 'No Tita, I don't want to be aligned with him,'" said Oreta. "In that sense, he (Aquino) is cruel. It is what he knows then...the poor guy was just relaying it to me."

Noynoy skips Marcos country

By Norman Bordadora

LAOAG CITY—SENATOR BENIGNO Aquino III yesterday admitted skipping the Genuine Opposition's rally and vow to win this province, reputed to be the last stronghold of the family of his father's top tormentor, the late President Ferdinand Marcos.

Aquino said he had to turn down a request from the United Opposition's ousted leader deposed President Joseph Estrada, by late to attend the Laoagleg (GO) election campaign kickoff here Luzon.

Estrada had been instrumental in GO's last major rally outside Metro Manila when all GO candidates—except for the detained former officer Senator Antonio Trillanes—gathered in Davao City weeks ago for a rally after he personally called each one of them.

"I explained to him that I'm not sure if what I have been saying all along in our campaign sorties will do as good in Laoag. I might just contribute to the disturbance if I say those things," Aquino said in a telephone interview.

The platform of Aquino, son of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., and former President Corazon Aquino, is on truth and accountability in government officials.

In his campaign, Aquino says there are ideals that his father and mother fought for when they were against the Marcos dictatorship.

The Aquino family has blamed Marcos for Aquino assassination in 1983 and it was Corazon Aquino who led the Marcoses' alleged ill-gotten wealth seized by her President Commission on Good Government.

"Going there is not something you will do without proper planning with our leaders (in the area). Sooner or later, I will have to go there on campaign," said Aquino who is now on his first national campaign after running for Congress to represent Tarlac thrice.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand "Bong-bong" Marcos Jr., son of the late dictator, said it will be best for all senatorial candidates, not just Aquino, to personally court the votes of Ilocanos.

"It will be best if they come here so they can tell the people directly what they plan to do for Ilocos Norte," Marcos told reporters.

Marcos Jr. said Ilocos Norte's leaders have yet to decide who to support among the senatorial candidates that include two from the Aquino clan-GO's Aquino and Team Unity's Tessie Aquino Oreta.

"The local campaign has yet to start," Bongbong said.

"The Ilocos family does not distract us who because will vote for. There will be consultations among local leaders on who we will support for the Senate," he added.

Oreta earlier visited Laoag with a number of her fellow administration stalwarts.

Aquino said he has already been invited by staunch Ilocano ally and now administration congressman Roque Ablan to campaign in Ilocos Norte.

Ablan is a flamboyant, even maverick, of Ilocano's father as the University of the Philippines College of Law before the late senator left law school. Ablan and the oldest Aquino were also fraternity brothers in the Upsilon Sigma Phi. Marcos was also a member of the fraternity.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, March 22, 2007
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Ex 32:7-14
Gospel: John 5:31-47

Jesus said to the Jews, "If I bear witness to myself, my testimony would be worthless. But another One is bearing witness to me and I know that his testimony is true. You sent emissaries to me...John also bore witness to the truth when you sent messengers to him, but I do not seek such human testimony; I recall this for you, so that you may be saved.

"John was a burning and shining lamp, and for awhile you were willing to enjoy his light. But I have greater evidence than that of John...the works which the Father entrusted to me to carry out. The very works I do bear witness for the Father has sent me. Also he who sent me bears witness to me is the Father who sent me. You have never heard his voice and have never seen his likeness; nor, as long as you do not believe his messenger, his word is not in you.

"You search in the Scriptures thinking that in them you will find life; yet Scripture bears witness to me. But you refuse to come to me, that you may live. I am not seeking human praise; but I have known that love of God is not within you, for I have come in my Father's name and you do not accept me. If another comes in his own name, you will accept him. As long as you seek praise from one another instead of seeking the glory coming from the only God, how can you believe?

"Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father. Moses himself in whom you placed your hope, accuses you. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

Commentary

The people are depressed and torn in the worship of idols which they have made out of wealth and fruit after they have taken from Egypt, the place of bondage. But Moses pleads on their behalf, yet again taking God to account for all the goodness he has lavished on the people. And God relents! Jesus speaks of God, the Father, the redeeming merciful God who is the true One, and all that Jesus does is God's work in the world. Jesus is sent by God the Father, more surely than Moses was sent by God to the people. And Jesus humbly confronts the people, especially the leaders for their lack of faithfulness and refusal to listen to him. "His claim you've never heard, his form you have not seen, nor that do you have his word abiding in your hearts, because you do not believe the one he has sent." Search the Scriptures—where are these words to us as well. Who do we see our hope on...certainly it is often not Jesus or the word? Do we plead on behalf of others, and do we strive to find in Jesus/God the true worship we owe Him?

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Gov't teaches Islam in state schools

HOLDING A 2002 BASO AT A madrasah in Northern Cotabato, seventy-fourers found a voucher of manuals' office, trade booklet and training booklets.

Militia Muslim insurgency in the south, and memories of the World Trade Center attacks in New York still fresh, the discovery sent shock waves through the country.

Five years later, officials say the Philippines continues to face threats from Islamic militants, some of whom they say may have been "brainwashed" in local madrasas funded by wealthy organizations from the Middle East.

Most the government and some members of the Muslim community are trying to sideline the influence of militants by offering Islamic education in Muslim youth at state schools and striking a moderate Islamic curriculum for private madrasas to follow.

It's a total mess, say some security officials concerned the growing foreign influence in local madrasas may have a serious security impact on the country, facing active Muslim rebellion for nearly 40 years, including by one group with suspected links with al-Qaeda.

"Daily, I percent of these teachers are under the control of the government," Nasrola Hasbullah, defense undersecretary and former director of an antiterrorism task force, said.

"We don't want our curriculum to become factories for terrorists."

More reached the Philippines in the 13th century, about 200 years before Roman Catholicism was introduced by Spain in the late 1500s.

Radical Islam

According to the 2006 International Religious Freedom Report of the US State Department, there are an estimated 2,000 Islamic schools or madrasah in the country, most of them in the Muslim autonomous area in southern Mindanao.

Only 40 were registered with the education department.

About 1,200 are funded by foreign and local donors. Manila bureaucrats note how the money is used.

"They are propagating radical Islam in the guise of freedom of religion," Victor Corpus, a former military intelligence chief who now lectures at an army war college in the United States, told Reuters. "It's like we're being fed from our side."

Corpus said nearly 200 madrasas in the country were getting funding from groups in Saudi Arabia that propagate the hardline Wahhabi form of Islam which has inspired al-Qaeda leaders.

Changing mind-set

Some of the students at the madrasa raided in 2002 were among those apprehended for the worst militant attack in the Philippines, the February 2004 bombing of a ferry that killed more than 100 people near Manila Bay.

Hamarsa Buzzanga, a Muslim educator and an undersecretary at the education department, denied that the madrasas were a training ground for terrorists.

"We're challenging their mind-set and we're refreshing our own madrasa system to promote a culture of peace and national unity."

Since 2005, the education department has introduced a new curriculum offering Arabic and Islamic studies to state schools in Muslim-dominated areas outside Mindanao, home to 5 million Muslims.

Nearly 1,000 privately run madrasas nationwide funded by the nongovernment or by donations from abroad, have also been required to adapt to the state curriculum for Islamic studies.

Test run in Metro Manila

In Metro Manila, the government has opened test runs for the new madrasa system in 27 state elementary and secondary schools, where a majority of the pupils are Muslims.

"In the beginning, it was difficult to learn Arabic," Danali Abdul, a 20-year-old beginner at Quiwalan Sampaga Elementary School near Malacañang, "I have to learn it to be able to read the Koran."

About 70 percent of 1,000 pupils at Danali's school are Muslims and most of them have been attending weekend classes on Arabic and Islamic values.

"We're teaching only the basic to help them understand the language of the Koran," said an unnamed teacher of 2,000 Islamic teachers trained by the education department. "Under our constitution, state schools are not allowed to teach religion."

Antiterror squeeze

More affluent Muslim families, including diplomats from some Islamic states with embassies in Manila, have been sending their children to privately run madrasas where Islamic religion is not the center of the curriculum.

Sheridan Jaggard's New Muslim Islamic School in Pasig City is popular by wealthy Muslim traders, diplomats and those who can afford to pay P1,000 to P50,000 annual tuition fee to attend.

"We've agreed to use local textbooks for our science, maths and reading classes, but most of our reading materials on history are still coming from the United States and Britain," she said, adding her school had helped developed Manila's new curriculum.

Like the state-run Islamic schools, Jaggard said they shared the same challenges of meager funds and lack of qualified teachers on particular Islamic subjects in the Philippines.

Banks outcry strict

"After the 9/11 attack, local banks have become extra strict in the release of money sent in our school from supporters in Kuwait and other Middle East states," Jaggard said, adding a new law on anti-money laundering further slowed inflows of funds.

"Even after thorough scrutiny of the documents, we've been made to wait for a few weeks to at least a month to get it."

Despite the odds, Buzzanga and Jaggard said they would move on and push for a moderate Islamized teaching program for the Muslim minority in the Philippines.

"We don't really want our Muslim children to become virtual strangers in their own country but, at the same time, we don't want them to grow ignorant of their culture and religion," said Buzzanga.

"We've just finished a series of volunteer and nationwide drive. This might end the fighting, promote peace and unite our country in the future." Reuters

Magsanoc, Tulfo, Bandera editors post bail

By Alison W. Lopez

WE SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED.

In a message to journalists, Inquirer columnist Mon Tulfo said he hoped the media "will not be cowed" by the libel cases filed against them by Jose Miguel Arroyo, husband of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Tulfo, Philippine Daily Inquirer columnist Ellen Tordesillas and Malaya columnist Jarius Bondoc posted bail yesterday for their temporary liberty in connection with libel cases filed against them by Arroyo.

Tulfo, Tordesillas and Bondoc were arraigned on March 13 before Judge Jesus Mupas of Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 94 on charges of libel filed by Arroyo.

Tulfo posted P100,000 in cash bond at the Manila Regional Trial Court at 3:26 p.m., proceeding to a total of 11 counts of libel for his articles which appeared in the Inquirer and its sister tabloid Sunstar.

Tordesillas posted P100,000 in cash bond at the Manila Regional Trial Court at 3:26 p.m., proceeding to a total of 11 counts of libel for his articles which appeared in the Inquirer and its sister tabloid Sunstar.

Bondoc posted P100,000 in cash bond at the Manila Regional Trial Court at 3:26 p.m., proceeding to a total of 11 counts of libel for his articles which appeared in the Inquirer and its sister tabloid Sunstar

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Miriam: Is Satur a political offender or a terrorist?

IS ROLANDITO DOMINGO A POLITICAL offender or a terrorist.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago said this was the crux of the multi-pole committee case filed against the Bayan Muna lawmaker over the alleged killings by communist rebels of suspected spies more than 20 years ago.

Some supporters of Ocampo say he cannot be charged in the case because he is covered by a proclamation issued by then President Corazon Aquino granting amnesty to rebels for offenses in pursuit of their political beliefs.

"The amnesty applied only to political offenders but today, a terrorist is no longer considered a political offender," Santiago said in a statement.

"While the Arroyos will argue that Satur is a political offender, the military will argue that he is a terrorist who does not fall under any amnesty proclamation," said Santiago, a constitutional law expert.

'Terrorism an exception'

Senatorial bet Joker Arroyo has said that Ocampo should not have been arrested because he was already pardoned not only under the Aquino proclamation but also under an amnesty proclamation issued by former President Fidel V. Ramos.

Santiago said this under interpretation, "an offense does not have to have political character simply because it is politically motivated."

She said that while the Aquino proclamation exempted "crimes committed from purely personal motives," the national law has added terrorism as another exception.

She noted that acts of terrorism were meant to intimidate a civilian population, influence government policy by intimidation, or affect the conduct of government by assassination.

20-year period won't apply

"When Ocampo escaped from jail in May 1995, terrorism under international law was already defined as any activity that involved a violent act dangerous to human life that is also a violation of Philippine criminal laws," she said.

Santiago also said that since the military discovered only last August the Leyte mass grave supposedly containing the remains of the executed spies, "the 20-year period for filing the murder cases has not yet prescribed." —DJC, Gilbaranger Jr.

MEMBERS of the police SWAT team raise their position on United Nations Avenue in Manila where militants protesting the arrest of Satur Ocampo were holding a rally. EDWIN BACASMAS

Satur not covered by amnesty …

Front page A1

killings by communist rebels of suspected spies during the 1980s. The case was filed after the military claimed to have discovered a mass grave in a Leyte village supposedly containing the skeletons of the victims of a communist purge.

Never proven guilty

Ocampo said he was charged with rebellion in a military act, based during his nine years of detention under martial law, and again with murder, kidnapping and illegal possession of firearms from 1998 to 1995).

'I was never proven guilty'

"But I was never proven guilty … Why should I apply for amnesty?"

Ocampo also insisted he was not invoking any amnesty proclamation in his pending petition with the Supreme Court challenging the validity of his arrest last month.

Another Bayan Muna official under reported hope that the amnesty proclamation issued by Aquino could lead to Ocampo's release.

The 1987 proclamation granted "full and complete amnesty" to rebels who surrendered or turned over their political beliefs. The proclamation also said that those seeking amnesty should apply for it.

Erstwhile said Ocampo did not need of any amnesty proclamation during the time of President Aquino and Ramos, unlike former military rebels, such as former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan.

"What I'm trying to say is, this case of Sat Satur should have fallen under this amnesty proclamation but he did not avail of that amnesty proclamation," he said reporters.

Ocampo said he prompt applied for amnesty and we accepted it in that Ka Satur did not apply … in his is not covered," Ronnie said.

"That's why that is the basis for his arrest, for a crime which has no prescription because it's mass murder," he also said.

Erstwhile raised the possibility that the Arroyo administration could issue an amnesty proclamation if there were people who wanted to avail of it.

"That could be a justification for another amnesty proclamation," he said.

Approved by Malacañang

Erstwhile confirmed the matter of whether Ocampo should be granted was discussed in the Cabinet cluster on national security, which ordered by the President.

"We were told that there is a warrant of arrest. So we said serve it," he said.

"The national security cluster of the Cabinet deals with policy and higher matters but since Satur is a high-profile person, we said, 'Let's just follow the law'… Other than that (we issued) no other guidance whatsoever."

'They put one over us'

Gonzalez lashed out at Ocampo's lawyers for not informing the government about their filing of a petition with Leyte Judge Ephraim Alunsin seeking court permission for Ocampo to stay in Manila for his hearing at the Supreme Court on Friday.

"Sometimes you get hurt [but] at the end you see you've become [to your lawyers ahead of us]," Gonzalez said. "They were already in Manila [and] they were attending an important case, and … they put one over us because

SC upholds acquittal of drug suspect, scolds cops

By Lala B. Salcerveria

WITH A STERN WARNING TO LAW ENforcers to respect the rights of people they are investigating, the Supreme Court (SC) upheld the acquittal of a Hong Kong national arrested without a warrant in Manila allegedly for possessing more than 29 kilos of shabu or methamphetamine hydrochloride, an illegal drug.

In affirming an earlier ruling of a Manila regional trial court, the high tribunal said the warrantless arrest of businessman Lawrence Wong in 1998, as well as the subsequent warrantless search of his car was illegal.

The court said the arresting officers led by Insp. Lucio Obrigado of the Public Assistance and Anti-Crime Against Crime unit of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) could not claim that it was an "indigenous debate" arrest because the suspect was not committing any overt crime for any police officer to arrest him at the time when nabbed by police in Manila on May 17, 1998.

"It is simply not allowed in free society as we have a law to enforce ourselves, especially if the law violated is the Constitution itself," the high court said in its March 16 decision.

"Those who are supposed to enforce the law are not justified in disregarding the rights of the individual in the name of order. Order is too high a price for the loss of liberty," the high court said in its March 16 decision.

Quoting the late American Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, the high court said "it is inevitable that some criminals should escape than that the government should play an ignoble part."

Outrightly dismissible

The Court also faulted the government for seeking the wrong remedy when it filed a petition contesting Wong's acquittal by Manila RTC Judge Reybeno Laguio based on a statement of fact. In its petition, the government said the RTC erred in declaring Wong's arrest and search illegal because he (Wong) had agreed to the search and voluntarily waiving his rights against unreasonable search and seizure.

"Such being the case, the remedy valued by petitioner People of the Philippines is that case, that petition is outrightly dismissible. The Court cannot overturn the acquittal decision/order of the trial court by appeal without violating private respondent's right against double jeopardy," it said.

But it added that even if it admits the government's appeal, the petition would still be dismissed based on its merits.

The high court pushed the government's claim that Wong had waived his rights against unreasonable search and seizure, saying the evidence showed otherwise. Twelve combatants under "intimidating or coercive circumstances" is no consent at all, the court said.

Police have arrested Wong following the arrest of two of his employees at the Glamour Modeling Agency for selling shabu. The two fellows disclose their source of shabu, but named Wong as their employer.

Police later approached Wong at the same out of his apartment, they proceeded to ask him and search his car. They reportedly found the shabu, two undeclared firearms, P500,000 cash and an electronic merchandise scale. He was charged with illegal possession, illegal possession of firearms, and violation of the Comelec gun ban before the Manila RTC.

In court, Wong argued that there were no valid arrest and search warrants and the evidence against him were inadmissible.

The Manila RTC later granted his "demurrer to evidence," effectively acquitting him of the charges.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Harassment

EDITORIAL

LAST TUESDAY, THE LONG ARM OF the President's husband, Mike Arroyo, again reached into one of the country's newsrooms. His intervention had the effect of leaving many of the seats at the news desk empty for several hours. We mean this literally, sadly, it happened to ours.

Arroyo had sued a columnist, our publisher, and eight of our editors for Stanton Bello's columns on alleged smuggling by Vicky Tok, allegedly Arroyo's former lover. On Tuesday, eight of the accused posted bail of P58,800 each at police stations 10 in Parañaque, Manila. However, they were detained for about an hour after posting bail, until a release order arrived.

After their release, publisher Isagani Yambot noted that out of 100-odd libel cases filed against the Inquirer since its founding, Arroyo's suit was the first to require the detention of business staff—even after they had posted bail.

Even police officials could not conceal the true nature of the libel suit from themselves. A police officer who declined to be named said it best: "It's a clear case of media harassment." He had reason to suspect anonymity: it is the President's husband he is implicating.

Another police officer told some of the accused editors, during their unusual albeit temporary detention, that the case was in fact truly unlike others, because of who the complainant was. Again, he was referring to the President's husband.

Another officer said there was pressure from "higher-ups" to transfer the editors to the Manila Police District headquarters and detain them there instead.

In the wake of acts of injustice committed by the State, Tuesday's emotional powerhouse does not rank high. It is simple harassment, something we are not stunned to, and something we expected from the President's husband. But viewed from a higher perspective—that is, in the context of Arroyo's unprecedented barrage of libel suits, which many journalists consider an insidious assault on press freedom—the curse in this particular libel case assumes a more sinister shape. Through us, Arroyo is sending a message to all journalists, especially those who do not have the benefit of available counsel or ready cash or media associates.

What is that message? That he can use the justice system to make life difficult for all of us.

Arroyo is a lawyer, and he must know that the chances that the Supreme Court will overturn half a century's worth of jurisprudence and declare him not a public figure are zero to slim or, well, his harassment of journalists will earn him (to use his own language) points in heaven.

Anyway, one regional trial court has ruled this month that Arroyo is in fact a public figure, by virtue of his high-profile marriage to the President. That means that the standards he must meet, to win his libel cases, are much steeper. We cannot imagine that other courts, already used to a legal tradition that recognizes the transformative power of publicity and celebrity, will reach a different conclusion about Arroyo's status.

Arroyo must know that too, if he was paying attention in law school, and despite the unpredictable misdemeanors of his main libel lawyer—so the question is: Why does he do it?

Because he is taking undue advantage of the slow, deliberative pace of the courts. In this, he has adopted the exact same legal strategy of his wife's administration: The administration's best lawyers know the Supreme Court would strike down the extraordinary presidential initiatives at the center of controversy late year—the call-boost and preemptive response policy, Presidential Proclamation 2017, and so on—and yet the administration went ahead anyway. Why? Because between the launch of the initiative and the effectivity of an adverse Supreme Court ruling, the administration would have time, sometimes as much as several months, to wreak legal havoc.

Mike Arroyo follows the exact same template. He uses his undeniable influence in the corridors of the executive, and perhaps even to some of the hallways of the judiciary, to make life difficult for journalists who ask tough questions or who point him to unflattering light. Ask Min Gonzalez, the Malacañang reporter whom police officers tried to arrest right inside the Palace, ask the 45 journalists Arroyo has sued for various imagined offenses, ask the editor who "voluntarily surrendered" but found themselves unaccountably detained. The name of Arroyo's game, which we believe the courts will declare invalid in time, is plain, vengeful harassment.

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Midgets, Lilliputians and 3-year-olds

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

In 1991, there were already 60 cities, many of dubious viability. There are 118 today

ILOILO CITY—ON HIRING, WHERE TO DRAW the line is distinguishable from the square kilometer capital from 117 other cities. Today's election campaign has lumped all of them into one deal. Local headliners circled around the entire arena, both at contest for San Joaquin town's mayorship, provincial capital's lap of war and the opposition's rally that filled the plaza.

Traffic-clogged roads, poverty, waste and flood control problems are obvious. But then the Iloilo's innovative mechanism for regional development clout—an Asian Development Bank says—could be a model for fourth and fifth class municipalities.

Over 10 years, citizens and officials of the local governments in Oton, Tigbauan, San Miguel and Iloilo crafted a metropolitan development council that provides a coherent mechanism for long-term growth. "Iloilo learned not to fear losing its independence," says the ADB in a new study: "Urbanization and Mobility in Asia." Such municipality "have distinct areas of specialization"—as unlike Cebu where Mayor Tomas Osmeña rambles other leaderless fury.

The Iloilo model, Naga City's transparent citizen participation, and Bacolod's battle-ring of its local tax base are vital models, the book adds. Today, 51 out of every 100 Filipinos cluster in urban areas. Population and economic migration will swell the number of urban residents to 65 million by 2025.

Streams of people head for Manila and Cebu, plus Davao, the spill over provinces of Laguna and Cavite, plus secondary cities like Baguio and Bacolod. In these cities, industries, trade and service sectors thrive, backed by schools, hospitals and other amenities.

In 1991, there were already 60 cities, many of dubious viability. There are 118 today. This poll-swell multiplication "strained the national government's ability to finance such local government units," the World Bank and ADB note.

"The small size ... prevents them from generating their own resources."

Senator Guingona has a plan of 12 cities, aside from Bacolod, these are: Baguio, Cavite, Batangas, Mandaluyong, Kalookan, La Carlota, Naga, San Carlos, Silay, Tagaytay, Talisay and Victorias. Most of these are "jokes," says a Philippine Herald.

Filmmaker Joe, for example, is a "city" of three to go. Surrigao, one of more the national highway line that alone doesn't even have an urban center. Siquijor has 81,161 voters—a fifth of Columbus's voting population of 116,487. And Sarlanac's 44,052 electors are dwarfed by Iloilo's 393,609 voters.

Many failed to generate levies by taxing talk land, businesses, etc. Thus, the share of locally raised taxes shrivelled: from 31 centavos out of every peso in the mid-1980s, to only 20 centavos today—and it is still shrinking. They're propped up by dules, especially by 1986 Internal revenue allotments from the national government.

IRAs are not linked to performance. And, like all unconditional grants, they inevitably sap accountability. Far too much goes to salaries. Michaby in Lambayong did bar it a fifth class municipality. But its officials pay themselves extra hazard salaries from IRA dules.

Little is invested for programs. The 20 percent "Development Fund" is meant for unmet human needs: nutrition, water, primary health care, etc. Most treat it as a rainy-pock barrel. Thus, shell cities rarely become "engines of growth."

Flawed Dalla he 16 more cities will lapse into law without the President's signature come April. These include: Bogo and Carcar (Cebu), Bayfray (Leyte), Carlobaglan (Samar), Gamiwa (Basilan), Tandag (Surigao del Sur), Butuan (Bonua de Oro), Tacloban (Laguna del Sur), Cabadbaran (Agusan del Norte) and Surigao (Surigao Sur).

Most have been "revamped" from meeting the P100-million threshold of locally generated revenue cast by Republic Act 9009. Don't expect Congress to dip into the Development Foundation to prop up Iloilo's treasury. Only the poverty-stopped Muslim provinces and fifth class towns will be tipped.

"If these municipalities cannot even manage to meet the basic income requirement just by collecting the taxes, fees and charges expected to perform and deliver as cities?" asks Iloilo Mayor Jerry Treñas who heads the League of Cities. "The vested interests of a few are the only ingredients needed to derail a rational and scientific law."

Former Senator Giron says: three cities recently "three year olds, the gnome, the Tom Thumb, the Lilliputian, the midget, so one could persuade to grow."

• • •

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What's that matter with the opposition?

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I CANNOT FOR THE LIFE OF ME UNDERstand why the opposition candidates haven't pounced on two things that have fallen in their laps from heaven, the way a dozen wonders does water in an oasis. They've done it individually, but not as a group, as desperate people calling the country's attention directly to them, rather than do a broken jerk, and not at the room of an outraged nation demanding an end to the impunity as a matter of moral necessity.

The two things I refer to are the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy classifying the Philippines as the most corrupt country in all of Asia, and the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing condemning the corruptions and killings in the Philippines and laying the blame for them on government.

The implications of the first are emotional. For one, it subtracts the ground on the administ... or attempted dismissal, of local elected officials, such as Former Trinidad and Jejomar Binay respectively, which is corruption. A government deemed corrupt by a reputable international organization has no business discussing who is corrupt and who is not, and using that as justification to embrace its decrees. Still, to begin with, a government deemed illegitimate by its own countrymen has no business removing elected officials from office on the ground of corruption, the theft of the vote being the most capacious act of thievery there is. Indeed, a government deemed illegitimate by its own people has only two options: to resign or to clamp down on dissent.

The implications of the latter are emotional, too. For one, it subtracts the ground on the administ... or attempted dismissal, of local elected officials, such as Former Trinidad and Jejomar Binay respectively, which is corruption. A government deemed corrupt by a reputable international organization has no business discussing who is corrupt and who is not, and using that as justification to embrace its decrees. Still, to begin with, a government deemed illegitimate by its own countrymen has no business removing elected officials from office on the ground of corruption, the theft of the vote being the most capacious act of thievery there is. Indeed, a government deemed illegitimate by its own people has only two options: to resign or to clamp down on dissent.

Frankly, I don't have why the elected local officials who have been victimized in this way have not yet banded together to file a case against GMA and her cabal, notably Senador Pimentel, who recommended their ouster. On the strength of the decision of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Or since a case like that is not likely to prosper in GMA courts, at least to hold a People's Trial in Plaza Miranda or Luneta. Or at least a Senate Blue Ribbon Committee hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Public Order hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Justice hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Good Government hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Public Information hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Public Accounts hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Public Works hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Public Utilities hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Public Transportation hearing. Or at least a House Committee on Public Health hearing. 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Or at least a House Committee on Public Statelessness Status

All in a morning's work

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Rolando Olivarez-Cinco

LEFTIST NAPOLEST JOE LEDUC OSMEÑA-lugged the headlines in the past few days, until he was overtaken quickly by the massacre of the 13 people in Leyte, arbiter mass graves reportedly were discovered by the military last year. He was front page news after policemen finally arrested him into a car and rides into a private plane and flew to Cebu where he was arrested in front of a personal appearance before the judge who had ordered his arrest, as required by court rules. His followers loudly protested against this manhandling of Osmeña's person. Meanwhile, they were strumming on the sympathy notes that the news generated for their party list. For pure theatrics, few can match the LDO.

* * *

He's at all heard of mass graves for decades now, such as those discovered in the late '80s in Lapanta. The talk then was, those graves contained the remains of NPA members who were "purged" on suspicion of their being government spies. Even then, Duterte's name was linked to counterstrike with those mass graves.

Now the "purged" are the media exposed as "spies," and the military has decided to pin Duterte down on this matter — stupidly on the eve of the elections. The truth about those mass graves and Duterte's involvement may be forever buried because of the head dousing and his media detention.

* * *

On the very day that Duterte's photo was splashed on the front pages of newspapers, I was invited to the send-off party for Philippine Ambassador to London Edgardo Espiritu, distributor each cheeks to about 20 workers and partners of ordinary soldiers billed to receive each P100,000 in cash from the Arroyo Fund for their gesture of bravery. Espiritu, who ended a number of soldiers who were prematurely discharged from service due to serious wounded service incidents. RSBS checks for P500,000 to the soldiers and parents are a paltry sum for they are the private soldiers' way of recognizing the heroism of their loved ones in defending the country's territorial integrity — the soldiers are mere cushy up and 20s, each one in three years old three — would wind up in the trustees offered awards.

* * *

Cultural groups in Cebu are up in arms over artist issues appointed "provincial consultants" by Governor Gwen Garcia. Those were handled in Metro Cebu for the latest Governor last January. One such group is the church-based Climate Foundation Inc. whose subsidiary movements, called Bong Bagunas, seeks to "promote the climate change issues." A statement issued by Fr. Gerardo G. Dizon, Climate's "overall coordinating steward," said that "income" of the pride are shared for the tourists's success, we are sure hand with dinner for all the corruption that has taken place." He stated that from an alleged actual all in price of our kampon of P12,000, it became P82,000 each in Cebu City P224,000 in Mandaue City and P220,914 each in Lapu-Lapu City. Interestingly, "there were a few items comes from the hand-earned money of ordinary taxpayers," Dizon said "[we] must hold governments accountable inasmuch as they are servants of the people's money and answerable to all the vigilant citizens of Cebu."

Stressing the belief that "there are still more honest than dishonest people in this country," he then "really many honest ones have remembered to the survey of passersby and citizens." Dizon seeks the support of citizens in making the campaign a success as well as the strict enforcement of corruption "FOR LIE and DETESTABLE." "We need to raise our collective voice, a HOLY that expresses disgust over CORRUPTION, a HOLY that expresses DEEP PATRIOTISM TO YOU," Barug Pilipino can be reached at barugpilipino@yahoo.com or cell phone number 0920-9000923.

* * *

Sadly the issue of the "grossly overpriced" lampposts seems to be the fly in the ointment in an affair that reaped praises from our Asian neighbors. It reminds me of when happened in the Cebu City Council when the lamppost issue became the last year of the Radio-subsidy-lemeties, when accusations flew thick and fast about some grossly overpriced projects in the Centennial area in Quezon Boulevard. In that latter issue, some of the project's proponents backed out and, in the rush to finish the job, some owners might have been cut by unscrupulous characters. It seems to be a problem that when grand projects are in the offing, the devil is always lurking, scrounging for any loose and those with a quick eye for that loose change down.

Heart in two places

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Gerry P. Dayo

"WHEN WE WERE ASKED TO STAND UP AGAIN our right hand, and pledge to remember our vocations to our constitution. I felt a great lump in my throat and I had to struggle not to cry. By the time they sang the national anthem, they had already lost me."

That paragraph, though emotionally charged, actually comes from what's supposed to be one of the essays in Lorenzo Tañada's great book "Letters to Two Places: the Immigrant's Journey" (Anvil). The measure she describes is a transcribed sentence for most Filipinos who have left their homeland in order to live in the U.S. of A. But in the case of Tañada, it is the U.S. of A. in Filipino could be as rightful as the Filipino themselves and their countries for long days.

Assunta writes about that pledging experience in her own essay aptly titled "Carmen Guerrero Nakpil: an intimate chord," one of the 32 essays in her book.

A little backgrounder: Assunta is one of the Pioneer Pioneers in Manila from 1970-2002, a total group was limited to just nearly 1,000 to fight the military's strong arm service against women in media. She was a free-lance writer for print and a reporter for TV's "Balitaw." Today, serves with the Asian Institute of Journalism, teaching writing, editing, and economics book-launching was an other chance to laugh, sit, reminisce and tell stories. The sisterhood has survived confusions, crises, martial law, coup, change of government, and even the EDSA revolution.

Among us, it was Assunta who bravely took on the dictator Marcos. 1988 it was, after her marriage ended. With three children (aged 10, 8 and 3 months) in tow, she hopped aboard to settle on years in San Francisco.

This last sentence begs for a "more to come" cliche ending, but that's not the case with Assunta. She has come home again and again. And when one has come home so many times, it's not really the last one that's left. She left her heart in the Philippines. She says has been leaving on the boat of San Francisco which she still loves ... to bits for now.

The 32 essays are grouped into six categories

— "Assimilation Angst," "The Mommy Track," "Friends and Lovers," "The Philippines is in the House," "Middle-Age Spread," and "Politics is Personal." The organization is very sensible because the interviews, reflections, ruminations and humor were published in Filipinas, the only monthly glossy magazine for the Filipino-American community (circulation of 45,000 at most, including those in the Philippines) and columnist of Filipinos which has been accessible since 13 years ago.

The categories suggest how Immigrant Dolphin experienced their lives in there, the single, lonely, single girl grown-up, who discovered that it's not all milk baths of the homeland in her house, in her mind, on her back. After nine she, where was she, why was she ... to be journey?

Assunta writes as a keen observer of what's happening around her and, more importantly, inside her. She writes not as a columnist but as our deeply empathetic friend who understands and gets profound — get as down home, with just the right touch, like the homemade flavors she treats by.

But the great surprise is the foreword by her head-strong daughter (an memento: bloodied, now all grown-up), who describes her life from the moment with her mother. By mother, my self. "Her words were thirteen feet which I could see the through her eyes, and the view rather than reading off into the distance and over our shoulders, was actually looking at us." I now place, if you ask me, I'm seeing.

But Lorenzo should take us herself through her own writing.

In "Grandma Cafe" she writes: "I held Mom's hand right as we pushed our way through the crowd. 'Stay me in meeting, Mama!' Mom ordered. She was already planning her presence known in this new day as how her klatsu be seen on Americans."

In the restaurant where we embarked, I gulped down the iced tea, hoping that the conversation in my throat would go away to didn't. But my attempts to swallow were like trying with change, this is not a piece of paper."

From "love, Patience and Beyond": "When Mom was nine months old Lolo was 10 and Ate, 11, was left in the country so sure this sister in a for-eign land. It was a matter of necessity that Mom follow her sister to both definite. The child-wise against an a single number and there small children didn't matter much of a reason if was believe the sentence. That enough, it's not just a story, and but an have memories we see out of the fog, and in so doing, I was able to get back to my children after they have taught me love, patience and ... reward to [a] more mature and understanding person."

From "The Big Night": "When I was a little kid at to do when her upbringing, and experience dark with the prevailing mores of America in the nineteen to addition to my anxiety over my daughter's [sic] dating, I was also, at my young-ing, I was struggling with my own immaturity. As a mother, I was concerned about her date's dress-ing. But as a poor adolescent from four years old, I practiced if he was cute."

From "Mom, Come On Will": "Her when they scenes ensued, I always find myself looking back with fondness to the drama in our home, town, and the other home where I've been to, knowing deep in my heart that when the time comes for me to embrace a grave life, those are the places I will return to and finally call my home."

* * *

Send feedback to arroyo@info.com.ph

Generation gap

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IF YOU'RE READING THIS COLUMN IN THE newspaper your average age, median research in America, is 45 years old. If you're reading it on-line, chances are you're a lot younger: middle-the 20- to 40-year-old age range for long you're on your early- or mid-30s) since has given up on buying newspapers to get their news from the Internet. The average American newspaper reader then, was born around 1952; the average online reader, anywhere between 1967 and 1981 but, more usually, in the 1970s.

Official statistics tell us that our population, broken down by age, is divided in this manner: 31 percent, 0 to 14 years old; 61 percent, 15 to 64 years old; and only 6 percent, 65 years old, or old. But let's look at it another way, to see if it's worth noting. The median age of our population, according to government statistics, is 22.6 years, with men starting to be younger (the median age for men is 22) than women (their median age is 23). The median half of our population is below 23 years old. Put another way, over half your countrymen and women were born around 1984, which means they are the most recently numerous generation of the 1,000 coup attempts.

Still, chances are, if you're in the habit of following the news through the papers, you're older than half of your countrymen. If you're between 40 to your mid-30s or mid-50s (and still belong to the biggest chunk of our population), age-wise), you compose only about 15 percent of that larger whole. These nine figures suggest something or other.

First of all, if you pick up the paper, you belong to a culture that takes political involvement for granted, and values views discussing national issues as an exercise of course. And your assumptions are shared by the writers about stories you read. In a sense, you and I assume certain things, and among those things are politics is interesting, it's worth talking about, and it's worth it to be aware of our mutual resources and a reason for engaging our resources.

Second, if we belong to a culture of political in-

formation, we also share a common set of experiences, which began with the end of the Marcos-era era, including the confrontations of the First Quarter Storm, the Ford through the machinations of martial law from the former to Cory's presidency, and finally the world order fell as I, and disappointed it with John E. while there is a big difference between Filipinos who remember what it was like before martial law, and those, like me, who were too young to remember the early years, I still think people born from the '70s to the '80s have more in common with each other as their political attitudes than those whose first what political memories are of EDSA II, which quickly proved to be a disappointment.

Third, this means a shared history leads to a stronger sense of commitment; without it, political involvement is a fad and not a habit. Which means ... for example, for a third party movement ... for example, for a third party movement quickly because a fad but it's a fad that's pushed.

If politics is fundamentally communication, then the memory is which we communicate changes over time. The indignant, we forget, was established as a form of entertainment in the 1950s. The indignant is a species that evolves from a particular generation of Filipinos, and it isn't very different from the memory by which politicians communicate by the invention of the public. Senators have used personal to the first electoral success as a result of the 1950s, and presidents from the 1950s to 1970s competed to candidate rush rather in the most formal modes of the stump as privilege speech. But the public memory of the 1950s is different from that of the 1970s, because of communication affected by unions and media people have gone just better than one may, and of interest of multimedia politicians.

And so, the media culture you and I adhere to may be winning. The younger you are, the greater the chances you have voters—is much, finds, less—different from those of your peers. The era of the boomers (after 1946) and Gen X (after 1964) are likely to continue making their own choices, but the Generation Y—those born after 1981—is more likely to vote as a group. Every political movement needs to appeal to its opinion, action, and commitment. But then, the younger you are, the more idiosyncratic you seem to be.

The ability of anyone—politicians, journalists, preachers, or even anyone else—to address a single audience is, of course, a thing of the past. It's a big thing, but it explains, in my mind, why Filipinos of a certain generation—the generation that includes, incidentally, you, the internet read—can just as simply (as a result, about as simply) and share certain fundamental assumptions that half of the population may never really feel. It's a generation gap. Different language, different points of reference, different ways of looking at our in reference to the defining events for many generations, the martial law dictatorship, can't evoke any feelings deeper than a shrug.

Post-grad adventures

HOW THAT GRADUATION IS HERE AND A NEW BATCH of fresh graduates are about to hit the real world in the country's job markets, the no doubt are almost-a-year, post-graduation experiences looking for a job.

My last months in the University of the Philippines were very tense: all kinds of final reports, a thesis, my graduation, not to mention the series of exams that I had to go through before accepting that precious "O" degree — for pumpkin to the professional world. I survived all of them and even graduated with honors — and thankfully, which I was really proud of and which gave me the belief that I was among the "highly in demand" graduates of the country. But I was wrong.

Job offers didn't come on silver platters. My aspirations — which, by the way, is typical to some students of the premiere state university — got the better of me. I didn't go "prospecting" for a job months before graduation. I held on to the idea that I can be choosy in the corporate world. So, completing among destinations so little but since they knew I was a UP graduate. But to my dismay, I found out that the State University seemed to sing a tell-us story.

In fairness — to the end to my arms-more — my unemployment to last for 4 "precious" of my graduation (commencement, a few guys that happened again.) The more and easy job I applied for I was back in April but not yet was it a research interview in UP Manila. I expected to be immediately hired because I thought my prospective bosses would have no reason to doubt about my competence, plus "potentials." After all, I was a UP graduate.

But UP as any other government institution, is a model inbred bureaucracy. I was summoned in a first interview in June. The second took place the following month. But then my appointment had to be approved by the UP president, but it was also the time when the new UP president, Emerlinda Roman, was the people processing my documents could not be certain. Applicants accepted in may got to start working only in the following December. I bailed out.

So in July, I considered another job elsewhere, albeit close to the course I finished. Molecular biology and biochemistry graduates like me do not usually go to research institutes. If graduates each year and only from UP, usually end up in the academe (either teaching or doing research), or in medical schools and graduate schools here and abroad. Since I didn't like to teach and didn't have plans of going again (still got to count) I opted to go to research institutes. Unfortunately, I have had enough of headaches, my only option was to go into research. But pursuing such a career in a Third World country is not at all financially rewarding — not to mention the perennial process of applying for the job certificate of eligibility, medical exams, computer exams, two months long interviews, by the time I was accepted, I had already waited not even enough to cover all that you agree be all done and your bills). Then, I didn't have any choice but to "cross [one another hole]" and see what was in store for me in the corporate world.

Me, my one class by leaving science mainly because of money. Molecular biology had been very exciting for me. I never thought that I would be doing the tasks that I did when did in TV shows I watched when I was a kid. Biotechnology closing and immunology, PCR and other interesting topics only a privileged few do. In a country where — are given the chance to learn these in-house training and experiences and other involve very expensive gadgets and reagents. I also had excellent company around; the best professors and the brightest "blank slates" (we have two minus cum laude awardees in our batch!). Taking the course taught me discipline.

But what is high-tech and interesting may not be my favorite subject, science tales only second. But my needs take of watching Discovery Channel and National Geographic, enhanced my penchant for science — specifically molecular biology and medicine — while my interest in things that had to do with business and economics eventually fizzled out at the time of my meeting scientific revelations that were no real need now.

Hence, my decision to abandon my dream of becoming a scientist somehow works to fulfill a "long haul" wish. Nevertheless, I still highly admire Filipino scientists sacrificing at times to work in other countries because of the lack of opportunities while. Indeed, we're competitive, the Philippines needs a science & it D program. Yes, Filipino scientists and researchers, many of whom are known for their significant contribution to science, remain the most intelligent professionals in the country and abroad. But I'm not one of them, except as I am of the fact that they are given so little recognition. If at all, by a society too preoccupied with other concerns called or not. I can't help hoping sorry for them. I hope that the government and the Filipino people will soon realize their value and importance, otherwise more and more Filipino scientists will be lost to other countries offering opportunities to excel in the international arena [will be lost.

My decision to "change course" brought me to an entirely different world. After several interviews, I finally was accepted as a "management trainee" for a bank. The job was great in sum. I also got to go to a lot of seminars and training, which are on the subject's, general banking laws, personnel supervision and bank products and services. However, in the middle of my training, I realized that the kind of tasks I was being groomed for — operations and branch work — area not to my liking. So I quit. My decision did not mean that I didn't like banking. What I hated were the tasks. I imagined having the kind of tasks something else one there is to right job for me.

Hence, I'm now actively looking for a new job. Every week, I get a call from different companies for an interview. And because of this my friends have taken to calling me a professional interviewee. Anyway, at this point, with all the good and bad experiences I have had, I could, perhaps, write a long essay on the "do's and don'ts in job interviews — for application, of course.

Looking back at these experiences is quite stressful. While my batch mates are already working, I'm still going through the process of looking for the right job. But I still have my job very soon. For now, at least, I'm learning how to be patient, optimistic and to make good use of my time.

Congratulations to the graduates of 2007 and I wish you all the best!

Andrew Agassid Jr., 25, is a graduate of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology from UP Diliman.

YOUNG BLOOD

Andrew Agassid Jr.

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their views on current issues? Send your reflective contributions from the commonwealth and below ... Ed.

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NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and city school, *and to mail your* [illegible] to it. Published, the position you [illegible] and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

Genuine CARP still needed

FR. ROMEO INTENGAN, O.I. refused the call for Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman to step down after the latter failed to install 122 farmer-beneficiaries in Negros Occidental. (SUNSTAR, 3/13/07). This "call to quit" is partly correct but not enough.

The failure of Pangandaman is not his alone; it is also the failure of the entire government and the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program. A statement made last Jan. 20 by Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the CBCP president, is correct. "[T]he law was defective in the first place, enunciated in the very beginning in a landlord-dominated Congress, further watered down in its implementation."

If CARP is defective, then the call for Pangandaman to quit and have him replaced with another DAR chief is not enough. The most appropriate call is to junk this defective CARP and formulate a genuine agrarian reform program with the experiences and insights of the resting peasants.

—NARCISO C. INTEGAN, OIC,
nar1thefaith@yahoo.com

Illogical allegations against NPO's Evardone

THIS REFERS TO NORMAN BINS dadoval's correspondy "Palace stirs ire over case." (Inquirer, 3/7/07).

The report mentioned resolution issued by the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission recommending the dismissal of Wilgo V. Evardone, officer in charge of the National Printing Office, for graft. It also mentioned one company as a party in a graft case filed by Evardone Inc. In its complaint, Bins Inc. supposedly alleged that "since of Ready Form's owners had given Evardone a car", that "the overacceptance of Bonifacio' accreditation had been done with undue haste" and that "Evardone had favored the company that purportedly rendered the contract for LTO forms."

Since we have no copy of this reported PAGC resolution—by an inquiry, are could not get one; we were told it is a confidential document, inconsistency in nature, hence, has no force and effect and cannot and should not be used by any party until such time as the Office of the President has finally resolved the case—we can only respond on the basis of what had been published.

Bonifacio' accreditation was revoked by cause by the NPO sometime last year after the president COA auditor of the LTO found that the company on several instances, delivered "poor quality paper(s)" to the LTO through the NPO; the deliveries (amounting to P6.3 million) passed consent because of the contractor between Bonifacio and certain LTO and NPO officials (prior to Evardone's assumption of office). Cases against Bonifacio and its officials have been filed with the Office of the Ombudsman and the prosecutor's office. We believed, in fairness to Evardone, that the resolution of his case should also be a note-in-this.

After the revocation of Bonifacio' accreditation, the NPO conducted a public bidding for Bonifacio' orders. Among several bidders, our company won with the lowest complying offer (28 percent to 33 percent lower than Bonifacio' prices)—a fact apparently deliberately withheld by Evardone's detractors and also overlooked by the PAGC.

The allegation that one of the owners of our company gifted Evardone with a car is pure conjecture. The car in question was purchased by Evardone's better half in July 2005 from a family friend who happened to be one of our stockholders. But the vehicle belonged to the stockholder who paid for it with personal (not company) funds, and the sale took place long before Evardone was appointed to government office. Proof of this, the car was already declared in his SAL when he assumed office as an assistant director of the NPO in September 2005; and the NPO security detail has on record that Evardone used the car on his first day of work at the NPO.

Here then would there have been graft when new LTO forms cost substantially lower than their former? And why would we have to honor our prices if, indeed, our company had attained to a rate for Evardone? Where's the logic?

—CLOIE FRIENDS
M. SANTIBAÑEZ,
president, Ready Form Inc.,
2nd Bulaqueño cor. Agbisag Sts.,
Mariana Heights, Kamuning City

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Bgy. and Mandarin Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to this: 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail: readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

LETTERS

Let Batangueños choose their own governor

THIS IS IN CONNECTION WITH the threat issued by some governors in Batangas that Governor Ralph Recto should his wife, Ilijan City Mayor Vilma Santos-Recto run for governor in the province of Batangas. (Inquirer, 3/10/07) The governor of Iloilo was reportedly miscontented about the public information campaign being undertaken for overwhelming closure among Batangueños for Mayor Vilma to run for governor.

Likewise she is the true choice of religious institutions, NGOs, civic associations, women's groups, etc. in Batangas. That is for those issue as city status, Mayor Vilma proved her competence, sincerity and dedication with solid accomplishments and unblemished leadership. That she will win by a landslide is not an exaggeration.

With that respect to the governors of Iloilo and Aguasan del Sur, may I request them to confine themselves to their respective provinces. Their meddling in other province' choice of governor is uncalled for. Banking to election in Iloilo Ralph Recto is acceptable with the resolution of the League of Governors of the Philippines (LPG), which voiced support for all 12 candidates of Team Unity to which Senator Recto belongs.

We assure you, Vilma Santos-Recto will be a valuable asset as a new member of the LPG.

—ANTONIO SAGUMA JR.,
mayor, Municipality of Calaca,
Province of Batangas

Do Filipino photographers have less rights than foreigners in RP?

I'M INTO PHOTOGRAPHY AS A hobby, with a point-and-shoot camera and a large digital SLR camera. But many recently people burst me from taking photographs of almost everything: buildings, transportation, facilities, parks, even public users, be they in Manila, Makati or Muntinlupa, etc. Moreover when I'm using a DSLR, isn't this curtailment of freedom? If I were taking photos of private houses or residences or property, I'd understand. But, then, when foreigners are the ones taking pictures, the guards don't bother them.

And what's in a DSLR camera that makes it a security risk, and why are the handy point-and-shoot and mobile phone cameras less dangerous? Is terrorism, the recently perceived don't mind if I'm using my small camera, that they do the moment I take out my DSLR. What are they so afraid of? I find their security mindset too "old school" and obsolete in these times when everybody can take a snapshot of almost everything and post photos on the Internet.

Haven't they heard of Google Earth, which can show images even of military bases or installations up above? I'm trying to promote our country through the Internet and yet my very own countrymen are making it so hard for me and other photographers. Only in the Philippines!

—TITO DAVA,
tito.dava@gmail.com

Seniors still denied 20% discount

IN THE PRESS RELEASED OF THE Inquirer, Partners Ramdas Nazareno in his column that Trade Secretary Peter Favila urged senior citizens, should they encounter some problems regarding the implementation of the 20-percent discount, to report the same to the DTI Direct Call Center. (Inquirer, 3/8/07).

Last Feb. 15, 2007, my friend and I both senior citizens, took our lunch in a restaurant located at Timog Avenue corner Scout Tuazon, Quezon City. When I paid for our bill, I presented my senior citizen ID card and that of my friend's, together with my credit card.

The waitress told that senior citizen cards were not honored by the establishment in bills paid through credit cards. According to them, to avail themselves of the 20-percent discount, senior citizens must pay in cash. When I asked them if they were willing to sign a document attesting to what they had just told us, they readily said yes and signed the receipt.

—ADELBERTO C. DIQUE IV,
Unit K, 12/F Cityscape,
109-A P. Tuazon St.,
Project 4, Quezon City

Ban spam in cell phones, e-mail

THE UNITED KINGDOM MAY SOON have banned spam to cell phones and e-mail, for a violation of this regulation, fully has imposed an unsolicited message to the recipient's mobile phone.

Junk messages are a waste of time, money and effort. It is said that millions of dollars are lost in wasted productivity as a result of junk messages. Although the United Kingdom has targeted mainly e-mail spam (marketing them as criminal offenses), text messages on our cell phones have definitely a similar effect.

Sens there is more reason for the Philippines to ban junk electronic messages.

—ERIC RAMOS,
fightspam@hotmail.com

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Team Unity: Where our money goes

TEAM UNITY SEEMS TO HAVE FORGOTTEN that the public is already used to administration candidates always having the advantage of machinery and funding during elections. However, this begs the question: Where does Team Unity source its campaign funds? To answer this, we only need to look at the government's primary source of funds—the national budget.

On Dec. 13, 2006, the House of Representatives approved the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for 2007 (P1.126 trillion national budget), which the President certified as urgent. The House members were in such a rush they had to cast their votes at dawn, after 15 consecutive hours of session.

The 2007 GAA has been with Malacañang for, until now, it is unsigned, purportedly being studied for possible "line-vetoing," which is a prerogative of the President, the Palace says.

With Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo sitting on the budget law, she were sure to have a very effective pre-election budget. Such a budget, she can use any and up again with a rumored budget. In this scenario, GMA can simply realign the allocations for projects and programs (a total last year to items under her discretion—for election purposes.

And as we say, while GMA still's sitting over a budget she herself certified as urgent, the government has been operating on a reenacted budget. As we all know, a reenacted budget can be treated as a lump sum which the President can disperse with as she pleases.

Now, more than ever, we should know our history. In the last 2004 presidential election, the government used a reenacted budget. During that time, in accordance with then Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn Bolante, P728 million of the Countering Maniguing the (CBB) program was reportedly used to augment GMA's 2004 campaign kitty. No only that, CBB was also declared to have P1 billion in "unliquidated funds" which is to serve the cost of Philbuild's cards distributed to the public during the election campaign.

Certainly, if GMA's allies did it in the past, as alleged, they can do it again.

The video-vividity of the budget is absolute executive control is bad enough, it goes unanswered—this administration is used to total without scruples. It is not hard to imagine that scruples as Machiavellian as GMA's is now using public funds to pump up Team Unity's campaign.

We in the Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC) believe that the only sustainable solution to this recurring problem is to make the budget process more transparent, democratic and accountable.

FDC calls for public vigilance, especially during this period, when the logic of money politics directs the unscrupulous instincts of politicians to use, for their own selfish ends, whatever public funds they can get their hands on. We hereby call on the voters to reject any candidates who use public funds in his or her campaign for a seat in government.

—LIDY NICOLAS,
campaigner,
Freedom from Debt Coalition,
31 Kamagong St.,
Central District, Quezon City

IPP rates should be lower than Napocor's

THIS IS IN REPLY TO ELIZ CUNIO'S LETTER, "Remedy for lower electricity rates" (Inquirer, 3/8/07) and Rodolfo Albano Jr.'s, "ERC didn't buy metering charges." (Inquirer, 3/10/07) While I agree with Albano when he says that letter, "Electricity should be part of senatorial debate," (Inquirer, 3/2/07), Albano also misdirects our issues/concern: supply and metering charges, and system loss.

To reiterate, I have no problem with liberalize as a model. The issues are: from the Napocor's management of liberalize.

1. The undisputed fact is that in November 2003, Meralco was buying power from Napocor-owned independent power producers (IPPs)—First Gen, First Gas and Quezon Power—at 99.28/kWh when Napocor was selling at P3.48/kWh. This is on record in the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee Energy Regulatory Commission. In this what Cielo calls the "supply mix (that) will yield the lowest cost to consumers"? Buy high when there is cheap supply?

Cielo invokes "existing contracts" as basis for Meralco's decision to buy from the Lopez-owned IPPs, yet in 2001, the Lopez managed Meralco without savoy from its "existing contract" with Napocor for cheaper electricity, to buy expensive power from Lopez-owned IPPs.

By the way, the Lopez-owned First Generation Corp. a Meralco IPP reported net income of P12-million (P4.4 billion) in 2006, up from 887 million of the previous year.

Here, too, that at the time the Lopez-owned IPPs were contracted in the '90s, their quoted price was lower than Napocor's, because 113 [illegible] of Napocor's existing power plants [illegible] Napocor's power rates [illegible] Napocor's power rates [illegible] Napocor's power rates

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

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Extracting cash from Mayon's rocks

By Ephraim Aguilar
Daraga, Albay

VOLCANIC ROCKS scattered over barren fields would not mean much to ordinary people in Daraga town in Albay except as reminders of a tragedy for lahar survivors.

But for six years now, Vicente Ajero, 46, has been creating images out of the rocks, wielding a hammer and a nail used as chisel.

Ajero, who is called "Tatang Bato" in the sugar estates near the Cagsawa Ruins, said he made his first sculpture after picking up a red rock while working. He was fascinated by its color.

When he got home, he tried carving an image out of it with a hammer and a nail attached to a rubber pipe. He formed an image of Jesus Christ—his first artwork—in one week.

The image was important for him, he said, for, unfortunately, he lost it to a flash flood at the height of Typhoon Yolanda "Reming."

Volcanic rocks and other debris loosened from the slopes of Mount Mayon, elevated in surrounding, lahar-struck villages like Buang, where Ajero's Mayon Artstone Shop is found.

The shop is a 2-meter-by-4-meter nipa hut that Ajero himself constructed. It is near the historical Cagsawa Ruins—scene of Mayon's eruption in 1814 that killed 1,200 people and has left hundreds of houses in surrounding areas ruin.

The types and sizes of designs vary in his shop. He carves human images, Mayon, the Cagsawa belfry, candle holders, chairs, tables and many other items.

One of the designs drawn in his heart is the "mother and child image" that reminds him of childhood days. His mother is now almost blind and lives with one of his siblings.

His two designs can be exactly the same, Ajero said.

"My design would depend upon the rock. I don't usually think much of what design I am going to carve. I don't sketch it first on paper. I just do it and would end up with all these designs," he said in Filipino.

VICENTE Ajero, 46, also known as "Tatang Bato" carves an image by means of a hammer and a nail at the lahar site in Barangay Buang. He has been working on his pre-Christian look, he said, not many people patronize his craft.

Among his collections are a mother breastfeeding a child, Barangay Magayon, the folkloric woman whose grave became Mount; a woman under bed sweets, and an almost abstract image of a man and a woman making love.

The price of each sculpture depends on how big or complicated the design is. Prices range from P300 to P10,000.

Ajero finishes his sculptures in one day (for the simple designs) to at most one month (for the complicated ones.)

The Cagsawa belfry costs P800; mortar and pestle, P350; candle holder that looks like a dumbbell, P350-P500; and mother and child varieties, P2,500-P10,000.

All of Ajero's sculptures are unpainted so that, he said, it would look authentic and natural. But some volcanic rocks come in colors other than the usual gray.

Learn sales

Ajero had thought that he could earn a living out of his stone art. He never really earned from his paintings and his folk songs.

He survives mainly by doing construction jobs. He now works on a project of the municipal government to clean and landscape the Lignon Hill, where the unfinished Mayon View Deck lies.

Not many people seem to be interested with his sculptures, he said. During lean months, he would sell only two stones.

"Almost none of the foreign tourists and travelers buy my work because they are hard to carry since they are made of pure volcanic rock. But I just love doing this," Ajero said.

Hope

Ajero said he still saw hope in his craft and that it might just make him out of poverty.

"When someone buys my sculptures, I use the money to buy food and other needs. When there's none, I rely only on my income from my contractual jobs," he said.

If someone who wants to hire Ajero would be willing to invest in his skills, he'll be willing to take it. "In putting up this small shop, I did not have any capital but only my mind, my talent, and the rocks I can freely pick anywhere," he said.

A Filipino expression puts it, "Para sa mga may loob pa." But Ajero said he wanted to be known as a man who could make a living out of rocks and reverse the adage to "Buto na naging pera pa."

PISM
Philippine Institute for Supply Management
Supply Management Today: Towards Relevance and Progress
15th Annual Conference and Trade Exhibit
March 22 & 23, 2007 Makati Shangri-la Hotel

SUPPLYLINK 2007

SupplyLink 2007 is the Philippine Institute for Supply Management's (15th Annual Conference and Trade Exhibit. This year's theme, SUPPLY MANAGEMENT TODAY: TOWARDS RELEVANCE AND PROGRESS underlines PISM mission to fully train and equip supply managers with today's most relevant tools, learnings and best practices in the field of supply management. This year's event has brought to the fore combination of speakers and topics, spanning the technical and functional roles of the profession.

More than 20 technical sessions are set, encompassing the key supply management areas of Purchasing, Logistics and Customer Service and Demand and Replenishment Management. More so, SupplyLink showcases the latest products, services, technology and systems.

With SupplyLink 2007, PISM resume to be at the forefront of the country's supply management landscape by continually equipping and updating its members with the needed perspectives, education, linkages and networking opportunities. This will enable them to focus with confidence in driving their companies to greater competitiveness through supply management innovation and efficiency.

ABOUT PISM

Founded in 1968, Philippine Institute for Supply Management is a nonstock, non-profit organization of supply management professionals devoted to the advancement of the profession. It envisions to be a world-class prime mover and resource center of supply chain management and leadership excellence in Asia.

PISM currently has 700 member companies coming from various industries located in Metro Manila and 3 provincial chapters in Cebu, Davao and Negros Occidental.

Through its seminars, industry group forums, general membership meetings, conferences and other events, PISM is an effective source of new methods, technologies and ideas from the business world.

PISM further strengthened its alliances with international organizations by being a C.P.M. (Certified Purchasing Manager) allied member of the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) based in Arizona, U.S.A., an affiliate of the International Federation of Purchasing and Supply Management (IFPSM) based in Switzerland, the International Trade Center - United Nations (ITC-UNCTAD/WTO) (ITC) and most recently the United Kingdom's Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS).

Messages

Warmest greetings to the members of the Philippine Institute for Supply Management (PISM) as you hold your 15th Annual Conference and Trade Exhibit, dubbed as SUPPLYLINK 2007.

Since 1968, PISM has been at the forefront of the country's supply chain management. In fact, the success of most of our companies and our country's global competitiveness would not have been made possible without your support and contributions. Your theme, "Supply Management Today: Towards Relevance and Progress", shows your unifying commitment to promote the supply management profession and to focus on the continued development of your practitioners.

I extend your organization's effort to further enhance our competitive edge. And I wish you all the success as you continue to improve your services by way of the newest technological innovations and strategies in the supply management profession.

More power and Mabuhay!

(SGD.) GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President, Republic of the Philippines

It has been 15 years since the Philippine Institute for Supply Management started this country's understanding on Supply Chain.

For 2007, and in keeping with the Institute's theme for this fiscal year, our Annual Conference and Exhibit focuses and highlights Supply Management Today: Towards Relevance and Progress. How appropriate as the word 'Ind' connotes progression.

So as this Crystal Anniversary of the Institute's Supplylink gathering, I sincerely thank and welcome all the participants, sponsors, benefactors, exhibitors and advertisers.

Onward in Relevance and Progress.

(SGD.) CARMELO C. OCAMPO, CSM
President, Philippine Institute for Supply Management

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Across the NATION

Dagupan mayor says he's sure of running vs De Venecia

DAGUPAN CITY—MAYOR BEN-JAMIN LIM on Sunday said he is definitely running against Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. in the congressional race in Pangasinan's fourth district.

Lim's announcement came after efforts to convince him to back out of the race and was issued few moderates apparently failed on Monday night.

"We dead," Lim told reporters here, mimicking what commentators usually do in the popular television game show, "Deal or No Deal."

Lim said he met with De Venecia at the office of former President Fidel Ramos, chair emeritus of the administration Lakas-CMD. But he said nothing was reached during the meeting.

"Eh, wala pa kaya kapoti, pero if I were supposedly (from Manong Ramos' point of view) happy that one of us is out," he said.

Lim said Ramos was trying to settle the impasse in the congressional race in the fourth district as their stand as of the party.

"Sabi ni (Ramos), I just supported my choice to run for Congress and I made it clear (to them) that I owe it to the people [of the fourth district] to give them a choice," Lim said.

He said speculations that he was running again for mayor "were just speculations."

"Ayaw ng mga (mambi) na sabay nabili sila eh (And while they have been bought) we just block propaganda," Lim said. Gabriel Casati, Inquirer Northern Luzon

'Jueteng,' polls seen reasons for move to oust Bicol cop chief

LEGAZPI CITY—A worsening feud between two members of a powerful political clan in Bicol is threatening to cut short the tour of duty of the region's police chief and efforts to stamp out jueteng in the region.

The feud is between Rep. Luis Villafuerte (Camarines Sur) and his son, Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte, for it's dragging with it Chief Supt. Eduardo Padilla, the regional police chief.

Padilla said in an interview yesterday that he has been trying to distance himself from the feud, but sources at the Department of Interior and Local Government said he has already fallen victim.

A top official of the Philippine National Police said efforts are being made now by the elder Villafuerte to have Padilla replaced by a Chief Supt. Val Yiu, a member of Class '78 of the Philippine Military Academy and currently administrator of the Philippine National Police Academy.

Padilla refused to comment on the feud between the Villafuerte father and son, saying he was merely concentrating on his job.

The bruises loomed from a highly placed source in Camp Crame in Quezon City that Padilla, who took over the regional command only on Dec. 28 last year, was on his way out as regional police chief.

Officials interviewed by the inquirer also said that, indeed, there had been reports of the impending relief of Padilla.

Other sources said at the heart of Padilla's relief was the opposition of jueteng in the region. A standing DILG official said jueteng operators in Bicol consider Padilla as an obstacle to their continued operations.

The Camp Crame source said Padilla was caught in the political rivalry between the two Villafuertes.

Padilla said he has not received any order replacing him, but if told to leave Bicol, "I will not stay any day longer."

"Like any good Ilalonen, I never at the pleasure of our superior officer," told Padilla.

"But until I receive one (order replacing him), I will continue to do my assigned tasks."

He refused to comment when asked what could be the reason for efforts to relieve him, but said he doubts that it was his operation against jueteng or the rivalry between the two Villafuertes.

Under Padilla, jueteng stopped in Albay and Sorsogon but continued in Camarines Sur, the Villafuertes' turf, and Camarines Norte.

The Camarines Sur operation is reportedly being handled by a certain Bogart while that in Camarines Norte is being run by one Jessie Lao.

Senior Supt. Renato Magala, Camarines Sur police director, said his men had been relentlessly going after jueteng operations in the province.

"When I was assigned in the province, there had been jueteng already but I have always gone after the illegal numbers game," said Magala, who is retiring in two months.

He said his men had arrested 28 jueteng workers in Naga, Iriga, Libmanan and Nabua.

Governor Villafuerte earlier asked for the relief of Magala but the police officer has remained in his post reportedly due to the backing of the governor's father, Representative Villafuerte.

The Camp Crame source said Padilla was supportive of the Lakas party of the governor. The elder Villafuerte bolted Lakas and joined the Kampi.

But like Padilla, Governor Villafuerte said politics had nothing to do with the Bicol police chief's reported impending relief.

He said he has always been against illegal activities in the province, especially jueteng and illegal fishing.

Inquirer Southern Luzon

KEY LUIS Villafuerte and President Macapagal-Arroyo preside over the first national convention of Ms. Arroyo's party, Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino or Kampi at the Manila Hotel. Charlie Dio

More pork graft exposed: PCs at ₱217,500 each

[illegible] private projects.

A congressman representing a district is allocated P45 million in PDAF a year and a party-list representative, P55 million. A senator gets P200 million in PDAF.

Shabbily built roads

In a presentation yesterday Cedo-NGO officials said PDAF Watch "monitors" from around the country, who worked on the project between 2003 and 2006, reported the following:

- Of the 64 road projects surveyed, 18 projects, or 28 percent, were found "defective" when inspected less than a year after their completion. The shabbily built roads already had potholes, cracks, or thinning layers of concrete or gravel.
- Of the same sample, two road projects were actually nonexistent yet declared "completed" in documents the volunteers had obtained from the Department of Public Works and Highways.
- The cost of the defective roads totaled P14 million, or 17 percent of the P84.6 million spent for the 64 roads in the sample.
- Of the seven 35 projects monitored, six had PCs costing P57,7,500 each "over, though their parts were substandard" or could be used for much lesser prices in the market.

Raise awareness

The report was dubbed the "first phase" of PDAF Watch, with the next mission expected to be released after the May elections.

The project aimed to raise public awareness of how the controversial funds were actually being used, and to influence legislation that will make the projects more transparent, according to Cedo-NGO executive director Romeo Montemar.

In a similar effort, PDAF Watch volunteers scour all the 225 members of the House (including the 21 party-list representatives) and 23 senators in October 2005, requesting information on their pork-funded projects under the 2006 budget.

Only 20 solons cooperated

One year later, after a follow-up letter and several phone calls to their office, only 20 lawmakers, or 6 percent of the total number of House members and senators, bothered to furnish Cedo-NGO with documents.

"It is apparent that there is a big area for improvement in the transparency of the PDAF/CDA projects of Congress," Montemar said at a forum at the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City.

He said his group "encourages prosecution" and would be willing to assist others who would like to use the PDAF Watch findings as basis for filing graft cases before the Office of the Ombudsman.

Not necessarily liable

Montemar conceded, however, that even among the ranks of the PDAF Watch volunteers, many would think twice about electing the names to the court and be publicly identified for security reasons.

He also explained that lawmakers were "not necessarily liable (may insolvency)" if projects in their districts funded by pork or financed) under their name began to smell fishy.

Districts of Joaquin and Fua

But on the sidelines of the forum, at least two volunteers agreed to be named in an interview and identified the lawmakers in whose districts they had found questionable projects.

Jonathan Alvarez of Subang Ilo Ilo said she personally found allegedly overpriced computers in "23 schools" in Lapuan, in the district of Rep. Ulieo Joaquin.

Ivy Tampus, chair of Siquijor Center of Development NGOs, said DPWH documents showed that a P5 million road project had been "completed" between Barangays Tuong and San Antonio II in Siquijor town, senior to Rep. Orlando Fua Jr.

The supposed road was still just a "rough" dirt path when Inquirer inspected it in June 2006—and remains so to this day, Tampus said.

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'The issue should not be Delgados vs Gonzalezes'

LUIS "LOUIE" GONZALEZ has been undergoing treatment initially at the Rizal Hospital before he was transferred to Makati Medical Center he severe depression over the death of his mother last November, according to the Gonzalez family lawyer. Gonzalez is the former husband of singer Kuh Ledesma.

do when they arrived in his room at 10:20 p.m., but she was able to escape and report the incident to the police.

A newspaper from the [illegible] reported that police had identified Luis "Louie" Gonzalez as a suspect or mastermind in the killing of the 51-year-old stepbrother. The reports floated a family feud over inheritance as the motive for the killing and said Louie would have planned the burglary so he could get his share of the Delgado fortune.

"This is nothing except one big hearsay. It is categorically impossible for my brother to have been anywhere near the scene of the crime," Ruby, who[illegible]-based since a car accident 18 years ago, told the Inquirer.

Severe depression

"My brother has been severely depressed since the death of my mother and he was brought into the hospital to erase him for severe depression. It's so impossible that he's there (in the crime scene) because for your information, he left the basement of the Medical Arts Center, the private psychiatric [department] where they treat severely depressed people. It is like a result, I was not allowed to see my brother or talk to him," Ruby said. (For details of Luis Gonzalez's confinement, see story on Page A10.)

Vicky Quintos Gonzalez-Delgado died of pancreatic cancer on Nov. 29 near in remembrance while raising her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Ruby said.

"Mr. Gonzalez has been named in Director's issue of the Manila Standard as the prime suspect in the killing of Mr. Delgado but the socialites and showbiz[illegible] clamor and all set the intimidation of the crime negate any possibility of his involvement thereto," Ruby Gonzalez said in a prepared statement.

"The Gonzalez family strongly condemns the killing of Mr. Federico Delgado and looks forward to the speedy resolution of the case," the statement read.

Deputy Chief Insp. Alex Tungcalag of the Manila Police District Homicide Division announced that police were set to file today[illegible] with homicide and frustrated murder charges against Gonzalez, two days in Metro, Page A10), that includes a statement by Gonzalez's lawyer, Perry Pe, that his client should not have participated in the murder because he was confined at a "maximum security" facility from March 7-16 and could not have been at the crime scene.)

Family background

The victim was one of six children from the first marriage of Fred Delgado, a wealthy businessman who after the death of his first wife married Vicky Sojuco Quintos, the only surviving daughter of President Elpidio Quirino who acted as first lady during her father's term.

The Delgado family is engaged in shipping, brokerage, cargo, real estate and other businesses.

Ruby Gonzalez is one of the four children of Vicky Quintos with her late husband Luis Tiacon Gonzalez. The other children of Vicky are Maria Victoria "Thaivic," Maria Lucia "Thaichai" and Lucia Gonzalez, former husband of singer Kuh Ledesma.

Ruby, who has been running a successful business empire being an[illegible] mother family had kept in[illegible] issue exposes connection in the name paper talking about inheritance feud and implicating her family in the murder of Rico.

"We are in shock with that allegation that is totally baseless. If they have incontrovertible proof, proof beyond any shadow of doubt, why doesn't we take it to the proper channels and not look stories in media irresponsibly," Ruby said.

"He's very too depressed to defend himself and that is what is so sad. And in his cases, I can't sit back and watch his face on TV as if he were already a confirmed suspect," she said. Louie has only Ruby to defend him because their two sisters are living abroad.

Not an inheritance feud

Ruby vehemently denied that the motive was about a feud on inheritance involving her brother.

"The one question is what motive does the Gonzalez family have in wanting to participate in committing an grave or as murder? Who is putting out all these press releases in the media. It is very strange that the press releases are exactly the same," she said.

She said her family stood to gain no inheritance from their stepbrother because her mother was already dead.

"This is a terrible travesty of the truth. If the claim is that we were part of the Delgado family, we're[illegible] we're not. We're not part of that. We live a simple lifestyle, we work hard and I feel that our biggest pride and our asset, if you will, is the name that my father and mother left us and we'll not hesitate to defend it," Ruby said.

"Let us just assume that whatever feud happens between families and first and second marriages, that is not unusual. It's sadly a fact of life that when there are two families they don't usually have fantastic relationship but murder is a big step and not that we are definitely not capable of what do we stand to gain with Rico's death?" Ruby said.

Ruby described her and her siblings' relationship with their Delgado stepbrothers as civil.

'Nobody deserves this ending'

"I will just say (we were) one big happy family [after their mother and father married], that's going too far but we're civil with each other," she said.

She said her stepbrother, Rico Delgado, was an "excellent husband of my mother for 19 years and a wonderful stepfather for us four."

Ruby said she did not want to fuel[illegible] allegations.

"This is not about a family feud. This is about a murder. Let's keep our eye on the ball. What happened was a tragedy. We lost our mother in an extremely manner. They lost their brother in a most horrible circumstances. I really empathize with them, nobody deserves this ending," she said.

"We're working professionals, we came from a good family. I would like to think that our reputation is without any taint. We're not high profile, we are not celebrities, we're working professionals," she said.

Louie, their youngest sibling, runs his own realty development business in the country while Maivic, a teacher who has a masters in education, now lives in Spain. Marina works for the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

Let us not gossip

Ruby said her wish was for the Delgados and the Gonzalezes to "pull together for the just and speedy resolution" of Rico's murder.

"Let not gossip and slander and insinuation and malicious news releases derail the judgment with all those emotions. Both families have suffered so why don't we work together instead of casting[illegible] each other and hurting an[illegible]," she said.

"I'm not here to bad-mouth[illegible]. I came here with a prayer for peace for both families, God does not sleep. What I pray for is to prayer ensuring the law[illegible] be allowed to run its course. That the investigators do an excellent job and that justice is served, the truth will surface and it has to surface. It will set us all free from this nightmare," she said.

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ALASKA'S Sunny Tiona controls the rebound against Welcoat's Rob Wainwright.

TJ Giants nip Beermen in battle of bottom teams

By Manong R. Castillo

ALASKA BILLS WELCOAT'S LOCALS UNDER control last night and pounded out a 99-76 victory that gave the three spikers of second place in the 39th Fiesta Cup eliminations at the Ateneo Coliseum.

Noneil Ella scored 18 points and four boards had 16 to honor for the Aces, who rebounded from a stinging overtime loss to Red Bull last week to share level with the Bombo and Coca-Cola in second with 5-1 slates.

Charlie Clarkhad 29 points for the consecutive Dragons and Jay-S Reyes finished with 10, but the others failed to come up with their usual numbers with second Welcoat import Alex Compton held to a humdrum night.

Welcoat took a second straight loss from six fils and is now at 3-3.

The "championship game" between Pure-Foods and San Miguel was spoil to advantage and Blatagale Chandler was awesome in his first game back, leading the Bruin Navy titans to a 76-75 in the second game.

Chandler, after sitting out Facebook's first three games, scored 11 of his 33 points in the fourth period before coming up with the defensive gem of the night that preserved the win.

San Miguel remained winless in four outings, but not after giving the Gamecocks lads of a fight.

"It's really nice to have Marquis back," Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio said. "We have been searching for a leader, a battered warrior."

"I'm elated," the rusty, even though I am still not 100 per cent," Chandler said.

Late Sports

More stories on A25 to 30

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4 Manila cops get jail term for extortion

Sentence read in absentia; accused out on police operations

By Alloco W. Lopez

FOUR MANILA POLICEMEN were sentenced to eight years in prison yesterday for robbing and extorting money from a businesswoman after they planted drugs in her bag.

Judge Silvino Pampilo of the Manila Regional Trial Court branch 20 ordered the arrest of the accused—PO1 Ferdinand Ca-ñas, PO1 Arnold Mining, PO1 Nolando Ladron and PO1 Fernando Laganzo—who were absent when their sentence was read in court.

They were also ordered to return the P100,000 in cash they took from the victim, Myrna Germodia.

Willkinsons Macaraig, the prosecutor's lawyer, said her clients were engaged in "police operations."

In her testimony, Germodia said that she was arrested by the four policemen on Jan. 19, 2002 for illegal possession of drugs. She added that she was carrying P300,000 in cash which she was about to lend to a friend.

Germodia said she was brought to Station 11 in Binondo where the suspects took her bag.

Laganzo then told her that they found a sachet of shabu inside her bank passbook and bragged that they could even plant a kilo of shabu or a small gun on her if they wanted to.

Germodia said she was transferred to a cell and was not allowed to make any phone calls. She later underwent a drug test which turned out negative. But P100,000 cash was never returned, she added.

In his defense, the judge pointed out that the seized items themselves admitted that the prosecutors they followed in arresting Germodia was unusual.

In his testimony, Cañas admitted that they conducted the operation against the businesswoman based on a tip provided by an unknown informant.

"Myrna Germodia) was not listed in their order of battle (a list of known drug pushers) and yet, based on just a single phone call from a certain informant, a buy-bust operation was conducted without verifying anything," the judge said.

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Delgado slay suspect faces rob, homicide charges

METROBRIEFS

Baby killed in fire

A ONE-AND-A-HALF-YEAR-OLD baby was killed when a 40-minute fire hit a residential area in Manila yesterday morning. The baby, Andrei Fernandez, was in the unpainted concrete apartment he was left alone in his family's two-story apartment at 1855 Road 21 V. Mapa Street in Sta. Mesa. The body was found on the ground floor near the stairs, according to SFO1 Rodolfo Reloj who added that the fire started at 10:00 a.m. in the apartment next door. "Mrs. Milao was not working and it was not known where the mother was at the time of the incident," the fire official said. "Apparently the baby was left alone in the house." The house was not affected while damage to property was estimated at about P120,000.

Tina E. Santos

Accidental death

TWO PERSONS were dead after they accidentally drank a substance used for cleaning metals and jewelry. Police identified the fatalities as Cindy Rilles Navarro, 3, and her sister Kayla Marie, 5, of 1850 Matalahan Street in Sta. Cruz, Manila. Investigation showed that the incident happened at 10 a.m. yesterday. The victims were rushed by their parents to the Manila Doctors Hospital where they died after several hours.

Tina E. Santos

DID YOU KNOW

[illegible] Institute and J. Rodriguez Sts. Ave. in Quezon City was established in 1988 to serve mainly as [illegible] Filipinos suffering from lung ailments, especially tuberculosis. It is run by the Philippine Tuberculosis Society. The hospital was named after the late President Manuel L. Quezon who died of TB in Saranac, New York. It was called Sanitary Camp which is meant for educational and respiratory problems.

Cyril L. Bondoc
Inquirer Research

By Aliliani W. Lopez

THE MANILA POLICE IS SET TO file robbery with homicide and frustrated murder charges against Luis "Louie" Gonzalez, 47, the former husband of singer Jodi Sta. Maria, in the city prosecutor's office today. (See related story on Page A13.)

Chief Insp. Alex Tungcalin of the Manila Police District homicide division said they have enough basis to charge Gonzalez with participating in the killing of his stepbrother, businessman Federico "Rico" Delgado, on March 20.

"We will also petition the Department of Justice to issue a hold departure order to stop Gonzalez from leaving the country," he said.

Tungcalin said they were also looking for Gonzalez's driver and bodyguard, Antonio Bonnaffin.

Gonzalez's legal counsel, Perry Pe, has already denied that his client was involved in the gruesome slay through a statement released the other day. Gonzalez became the victim's stepbrother when his mother, Vicky Quirino, married Francisco "Paco" Delgado, Rico's father. Quirino passed away in November last year.

Pe said his client could not have participated in the murder because he "confined (it) a 'monstrous anomaly-hotlip'" from March 7 to 18.

"Louie is not well, and he will need professional care in regain his emotional equilibrium. To accuse him of murder, at this time, perhaps the barest point in his life, to grotesque and absurd," the statement said.

Soon after the statement was released, the police shifted their attention to Gonzalez's sister, Ruby Gonzalez-Meyer. After implicating Gonzalez as the "mastermind," they are now looking into the possibility that Meyer could have ordered the killing because of her "higher intellectual and mental capacity."

A police official who asked for anonymity said Rico and his brother, Ferrico, had a fight with Meyer over the conjugal ownership of some of their parents' properties, including condominium units.

According to Pe, Gonzalez was already confined in the psychiatric ward of Asian Hospital at the time Rico was killed.

He said that Gonzalez became incoherent and disoriented on March 5, conditions which were from that depression he had undergone after his mother, Vicky Quirino, married Francisco "Paco" Delgado, Rico's father. Quirino passed away in November last year.

"While in a hospital room, Louie suffered a severe anxiety attack which he confirmed and unabated. His sister, Ruby was notified, and she dispatched her son, Marco S. Salinas, to the hospital. Louie's girlfriend, reunited (to) the ex-spouses and suffering from exhaustion, left the hospital," Pe's statement said.

"Upon conference with the attending doctors, Louie was transferred that same day to the Makati Medical Center Annex and to an ambulance, accompanied by Mr. Salinas. Louie remained at MMC Annex until March 18th, when he was transferred to another location, unbeknownst to anyone, including his lawyer," it added.

Rico, 53, was stabbed dead by two unidentified men in his private house at the Mayflower building on Leon Guinto Street, Malate, Manila. His companion, aya Jessa Ocap, by the suspects although she was able to escape and report the incident to the police.

Tungcalin said Rico's son saw the face of one of the suspects when he removed his ski mask while trying to open a vault inside the domain.

The vault's contents remain unknown though reports indicate they could be "important property documents."

SHARK ATTACK
A woman takes a picture of her family posing in front of the gaping jaws of a shark, actually a replica found in Baywalk, Roxas Boulevard, Manila.

Sexagenarian former hospital cashier guilty, judge rules

By Margaux C. Ortiz

[illegible] FOR REPEATED EXpressions of sympathy for the "needy sexagenarian," a Quezon City Regional Trial Court judge yesterday found a former cashier of a government hospital guilty of malfeasance of public funds and sentenced her to serve a maximum term of over 18 years in prison.

Judge Hilario Laqui of QC RTC Branch 218 said the prosecution was able to establish beyond reasonable doubt that Rosalina F. Dulay embezzled more than P2 million entrusted to her by the Quezon Constitutional Medical Center (QMMC).

He sentenced her to a minimum of 10 years and one day to a maximum of 18 years, eight months and one day.

However, the judge did not impose any fine on Dulay since she had already paid back the amount that was missing after she was charged in 2006.

"Irrespective of the orderly sanctimonies of life, should be exposing their retirement with their families, spared from the harsh realities and free from the roller coaster rides of life, ironically charged before this court is a sexagenarian, who is likewise of proper health," Laqui said in his decision.

The court documents showed that Dulay, then a cashier of the QMMC, was charged for taking advantage of her position and embezzling over P2.2 million in hospital funds "to the damage and prejudice of the government."

During the trial, hospital chief Dr. Rosalinda Arandia testified that she received discrepancies in the hospital's certificate of deposit and daily collections in June 2002.

Audit reports confirmed that Dulay had failed to deposit more than P2 million at the Land Bank of the Philippines, prompting a QMMC audit team leader to send the accused a letter requiring her to account for the such shortage.

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

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[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
LOUIE ENTERPRISES, INC.	[illegible]	Customer Support Staff
LOUIE ENTERPRISES, INC.	[illegible]	Accounting Clerk
PALMAVE TRADING CO., INC.	[illegible]	Marketing Manager
PALMAVE TRADING CO., INC.	[illegible]	General Operations
PALMAVE TRADING CO., INC.	[illegible]	Business Development Officer
PHIL. SHELTER CORPORATION	[illegible]	President
PHIL. SHELTER CORPORATION	[illegible]	Vice President
PLUMAGE INC.	[illegible]	President
DIGITAL MUSIC (PHILIPPINES), INC.	[illegible]	Operations Manager
[illegible]	[illegible]	Operations Coordinator
R & S BRUNDLE & TUTTLE CORPORATION	[illegible]	Vice President
SUPERMARKET CORPORATION OF THE PHILIPPINES	[illegible]	Customer Service Representative
[illegible]	[illegible]	Chief Finance Officer
[illegible]	[illegible]	Marketing Manager
CONSULTANTS, PUBLIC SERVICES, INC.	[illegible]	Sr. Operations Manager/Technical

If you have any information/objection to the above-mentioned application, please communicate with this Regional Director.

[illegible]
Regional Director

The Alien Labor is free entitled to Labor Market Protection and Productivity Enhancement Program Fee (LMPEPF) under EO 339 (RA 8 1 1 1

Courtroom drama mars Leviste arraignment

LEVISTE, flanked by police escorts, waits for the resumption of proceedings yesterday. At right, Dominador Gómez, Leviste's alleged photographer, leaves the court after asserting the ire of State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco.

By DJ Yu

AN ANGRY JUDGE SWORE GUY. ace yesterday challenged two lawmakers of the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) to a fist fight during a hearing of his murder case.

Leviste, former governor of Batangas who was arraigned on charges of killing his aide Rafael de los Santos, also lashed out at the lead prosecutor, the various daughters and the media, saying he was a victim of a "miscarriage of justice."

The hearing started at 9 a.m. although at past 10 hours of debate as Leviste's lawyers sought another dismissal of their client's arraignment on murder charges.

The arraignment, however, pushed through although Leviste refused to enter a plea, prompting Judge Elmo Alameda of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 to enter a "not guilty" plea on his behalf.

The confrontation between Leviste and the VACC coordinators occurred moments after Alameda called a five-minute recess.

At about 11 a.m., Leviste approached the VACC coordinators seated at an adjacent bench and asked them: "Do you know what you're doing here?"

"Hindi niyo ba ito ng hahagut? Do you also want a fight?" he asked. ("Hahagut" is Batangueno slang for a fight.) The lawmen, one of whom was identified as Stacey Gomez, did not reply but told Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco what transpired.

Velasco later made a unanimous plea to put an removal order. Inapproved. This led to another verbal tussle between the prosecutor and Leviste, who said Velasco should stop since he (Leviste) would "be able to get even anyway."

As rebuttal point, Velasco said: "I want to be professional. I never have to (but count trying to be just frustrated. I just want the accused to explain why he is threatening me."

He also demanded in open court the name of Leviste's photographer who took pictures of him, the VACC coordinators and other reporters, reportedly on orders of the accused.

At one point, Velasco held the photographer, Dominador Gómez, in the shoulders and demanded to know his name. Alameda put a stop to the exchange and asked Velasco to put his manhandling on setting.

Later, Leviste told reporters: "I'm very sad for justice from this court. Emmanuel Velasco for not knowing he's beyond bounds in his role as a prosecutor."

"I'm very sad, sad for Dino de los Santos (the victim's daughter) for allowing herself to be used by illegal hearsay hunters as an instrument for blackmail," he said.

He added, "I'm very sad for the public who seemingly or unerringly have been misled by media to believe the lies made by publicity seekers like Prosecutor Velasco."

"I have been a victim of a miscarriage of justice. This (where, I learned) has done this to many people before me. I'm not the first victim. I hope I'm the last," Leviste said. Sought for comment, Velasco objected to being called a publicity seeker and legal bounty hunter, saying there was "a need to be transparent to the media" to prevent corruption in the justice system.

Dino on the other hand, announced back: "Who is he referring to? We are the victims here. And I would suppose we can, we will some. We are the aggrieved party. We have no money or influence."

The court also heard the testimony of Southern Police District Senior Insp. Elizalde Co8 who testified that the 9 mm gun he (an Glock pistol) belonging to the slain of the killing had the safety lock on.

The prosecution is trying to establish that they have strong evidence against Leviste and that he should not be granted bail.

De las Alas was found dead inside his office at the 6th Tower in Makati City on Jan. 12. Leviste later confessed that he shot his friend and resigned as solon in self-defense.

Meralco robbery could be inside job, say cops

By Jeannette I. Andrade

POLICE INVESTIGATORS ARE LOOKING the possible involvement of an insider in Monday's robbery of the Manila Electric Co. office in Commonwealth, Quezon City.

Describing the operation as "too easy" a senior police official of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) said that several indicators point to an accomplice in the company.

The robbery was carried out last Monday and the robbers vital information that helped their heist succeed," the source, who asked for anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media, told the Inquirer.

The source knew that the receiving counters were loaded with cash payments at that time because it was the due date for electricity bill payments, he added.

He also pointed to the lax security at the Meralco office in Barangay Batasan Hills where three security guards were easily disarmed by the robbers of their .38-caliber service revolvers.

The senior police officer further said that prior to the incident, witnesses recalled seeing a gray Toyota Vios (UHS 586) circling the area. "The should have immediately alerted the security guards that something was about to happen and they should have asked the nearest police detachment for strategic deployment of personnel which would have thwarted the robbery," he said.

He said that prior to the heist, all QCPD units had been alerted against possible bank robberies in the area. The tight security employed around the different financial institutions may have prompted the robbers to look for an easier and unlikely target, the official pointed out.

The police learned the particular that the robbery took P750,000 in cash, 16 checks of an undetermined amounts and the cell phones of two Meralco employees.

Police investigators are looking into the possibility that the Bistro Gang mentioned the heist based on the organized manner by which the suspects executed the operation that took only 10 minutes.

But this leans not so much the business of the Meralco robbers with the identities of suspected Bistro Gang members who previously established links and committed establishments in the city and other parts of Metro Manila.

Investigators are tracking the owner of the gray Yamaha FZ used in the robbery which was found abandoned on ESP Road in Filinvest 1, several meters away from the Meralco office.

They are also conducting follow-up operations to track down the robbers who were reported to be hiding in the southern part of Metro Manila.

2 bodies found in QC vacant lot

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A VIGILANTE GROUP-COULSIE BI- buried the death of a man and a woman whose bodies were found in a grassy lot in Barangay Payatas-B, Quezon City yesterday morning, police said.

The cause of death, however, has yet to be determined as their bodies were not allegedly bullet-riddled.

The two were found by a passerby who became curious about the stench coming from the grassy lot. So the woman's clerk was a sign which read: "Kami ako (Owner ours)."

Supt. Edgardo Tamayo of the Quezon City Police District Batasan Hills Station 6, described the woman as between 25 and 28 years old, 5'1" in height and clad in a striped sleeveless shirt and denim pants.

The man was between 28 and 30 years old, 5'3" in height and dressed in a brown shirt and camouflage shorts.

Their mouths were gagged with what appeared to be chipa taken from a garbage bag.

Tamayo said that the bodies may have been dumped on Sunday or Monday.

He added that the sign "heart ako" probably meant that the woman was an informant for an illegal drug syndicate.

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Abductors ask ₱3M for release of actress' sis

By Tina G. Santos

THE PLOT THICKENS.

Former actress and model Rochelle Barrameda yesterday told the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) that she has received a ransom demand for the safe return of her sister who has been missing for over a week.

She added that the demand which she received through a text message, asked for ₱3 million in exchange for the release of Bailey Ivee Barrameda, 26, who disappeared the other Wednesday.

Assistant Regional Director Victorio de Guzman, chief of the NBI's Special Action Unit, said that while they were working all information into consideration, they were not discounting the possibility that the text messages could be part of "diversionary tactics meant to mislead investigators."

Barrameda said they last saw Ivee on March 14 before she moved to a hotel in Cubao to prepare Miss Globe Collins.

Barrameda said her sister's disappearance might have something to do with the complaint the latter filed against her estranged husband, Ahmad Jimerson El.

De Guzman said that they had invited Ahmad to the NBI for questioning.

Ahmad, however, did not show up but sent his lawyer instead.

Supt. Ariel Dio, that he would face the charges against him.

At the continuation yesterday of the preliminary investigation of the kidnapping charges filed against Bonifacio, Roger Bilking, a lawyer of the QCPD Criminal Investigation Unit said the fact that Peter has been missing for almost two months was a bad sign.

Peter was already have been killed by his abductors, he added, although this may hurt to prove in the absence of a body. Bonifacio and three other men are accused of kidnapping Peter from the home of his girlfriend, Jeanette Wincere, in Quezon City.

Police official still missing; QCPD counsel worried

By Jeannette I. Andrade

INVESTIGATORS OF THE QUEZON City Police District (QCPD) suspect the worst in the case of a police inspector who was reportedly abducted last kidnapped by another police official and has not been seen since.

Traffic Management Group subordinate officer, Supt. Rodrigo Bonifacio, who is believed to have kidnapped Chief Insp. Michel Siaw on Feb. 1, has also not reported for work since he went on leave after the incident. Sources, he reportedly told his superior, Chief Director Chief

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Invitation for Bids (IFB)

HONG KONG-BOUND
A pair of panda for Hong Kong—the male young panda, presently identified as No. 606 (rear) and the female, No. 619—are seen together in the China Panda Protection and Research Center in Wolong, southwest China's Sichuan Province on Tuesday March 20. AFP

Bush vows to resist subpoenas for aides in prosecutor storm

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT George W. Bush Tuesday vowed to resist any attempt by Congress to force top aides to testify under oath about a row over fired prosecutors, warning against a "unilateral (White) expedition." In his boldest political language since Democrats seized Congress in November, Bush accused his opponents of using the escalating showdown to "score political points" and refused to back down.

Faced with a fierce new partisan fight as he tries to launch his term a second-term administration bobbled by the unpopular Iraq war, Bush warned: "we will not go along with a partisan fishing expedition." Earlier, the president's personally-endorsed AG, Ash- Attorneys were fired.

Bush raised the issue of executive privilege, the assertion which is supposed to safeguard a president's capacity to receive candid, unstained best advice, saying aides should not fear being hauled before investigators.

But Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer refused to accept the White House reasoning, saying key figures must be forced to testify under oath.

"What is the objection to an oath? If there's nothing to hide and everyone is telling the truth, there should be no objection.

"What is the objection to having this discussion in public?" Schumer said on the Senate floor.

Bush's endorsement for Gonzales, whom he handpicked to be his lawyer in 1994 while still governor of Texas, came in an early morning call from the Oval Office, Bush's spokesperson Tony Snow said.

"He expressed his support for the attorney general and his strong backing," Snow told AFP by telephone.

Bush's boss hoped to remove defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld after the Republicans were ousted in November congressional elections, the White House is desperate not to hand Democrats the scalp of another key administration figure.

Gonzales has also come under fire over an internal probe that found that the federal Bureau of Investigation, part of his department, breached privacy laws in overzealously seeking access to information about newer suspects.

The head of the Justice Department's probe, Glenn Fine, said Tuesday he believed the FBI's violations were "serious and unacceptable." The controversy at the Justice Department is per another blow to Bush, who has sunk to his lowest level in opinion polls.

In the past weeks the administration has been battling off standards over the move of seconded ambassadors running from Iraq and Afghanistan, the resignation of a former White House aide for perjury and the prosecutors affair. AFP

Castro could return to work 'soon'—minister

HAVANA—FIDEL CASTRO, WHO has been recovering from cancer surgery almost eight months ago, could resume a more active role in government work "soon," a top cabinet member said Tuesday.

"What we are expecting is that we will have him back (at work) with us, in a more active way, soon," Communist Party Politburo member and Basic Industry Minister Nuñez Garcia told reporters.

Castro, 80, handed over power for the first time in more than four decades on July 31 to his brother and regular number-two Raul Castro, 71, following the surgery.

"Our commitment is recovering, the recovery process is making progress," Garcia said. "I would say that we're already in the leadership that agrees on the main issues, and the country's most important decisions. And he also is very involved in all these areas: oil and energy, on which he always has been in the lead." "We have been receiving his directives, the instructions he gives, and the outlook is very good, very favorable," added Garcia, in an unusual level of detail on Castro's health, which Cuba regards as a state secret.

Speculation on Castro's health has at times appeared wild over the past several months: US officials at one stage suggesting that Washington's longtime nemesis had just days left to live.

March to the chagrin of hardline Cuban exiles in Miami, who had permanently danced on his grave, video footage of Castro's broadcast on Jan. 30 showed him looking healthier and more alert than in the previous pictures released by Cuban authorities.

Bolivian President Evo Morales, a close Castro ally, said Monday that Fidel Castro would make his first public appearance since last year on April 28, at a meeting in Havana of leaders from the alternative development group Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), backed by Cuba.

"I think that was a remark President Evo (Morales) made, and he must have some basis on which to have made it," Garcia told reporters.

In Bogota, a photograph published Tuesday in a Colombian newspaper shows a lively Fidel Castro speaking with writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the strongest evidence that the Cuban leader appears to be recovering well from surgery.

The picture in El Tiempo shows Castro sprinkling salt for Colombian Nobel Prize-winning novelist, who visited Castro in Havana on March 12, in what appears to be a garden in a residence.

Dressed in a sweatshirt in red, white and blue Cuban colors, Castro is addressing Garcia Marquez, who is smiling and listening attentively.

On Monday Garcia Marquez told AFP that "Fidel is very well, better than many think." Castro has been recently out of sight since turning over power July 31 to his brother. His lengthy convalescence has generated much speculation as to whether he will return to power, and if so, to what extent.

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said in Portugal on Friday that Castro had gained weight and is exercising daily.

On July 16, when asked if Fidel would seek re-election in 2008, national assembly leader Ricardo Alarcon told journalists: "I am certain (Fidel Castro) will be in perfect condition to continue assuming this responsibility." AFP

At THIS photo released by Colombia's newspaper El Tiempo and dated March 12, Cuba's President Fidel Castro talks to Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez in Havana.

Strike over unpaid wages paralyzes Israel

JERUSALEM—ISRAELI MEN workers union paralyzed the country on Wednesday, shutting down airports, government offices and universities in an open-ended general strike over unpaid wages.

Around 400,000 public workers were on strike at 9 a.m. after last-minute reconciliation efforts between the government and the Histadrut labor federation failed to resolve the row.

Government ministries, except for defense, shut their doors and stopped answering telephones. All border crossings were closed as the country's trains, planes and ports stopped running. Rubbish removal stopped and refuse bins grounded in a halt.

Some even feared disruptions to the nation's water supply as the water authority-linked body operations to a minimum, the Haaretz daily newspaper reported.

But health and security services will operate as usual, as will banks and the stock exchange.

"We decided that the non-payment of wages to public servants must come once and for all," Histadrut secretary general Ofer Eini told public radio.

Eini has warned the strike will continue until all civil servants receive their wages.

Despite the strike action, a plane carrying the English football team heading for Israel for a crucial Euro 2008 qualifier will be allowed to land at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport, an airport authority spokesperson said AFP.

Planes carrying the 5,000 English football fans due in Israel to cheer on their team will also be allowed to touch down, the Haaretz newspaper reported.

Tel Aviv fan organizers who are eagerly awaiting an uptick in sales to head-shaking English football fans breathed a collective sigh of relief, Israeli television reported.

Eini told the newspaper that he didn't want to spoil the fun or to hinder chances of advancing by losing Saturday's match to be cancelled.

It is feared that the airport shutdown will hurt Israeli tourism ahead of the Passover holidays on April 2 and 3, when tens of thousands of Jews travel to Israel from around the world to commemorate the biblical exodus from Egypt.

Beyond the strike over long held efforts to protest against unpaid salaries to the public sector. The union claims that around 1,700 employees in over 30 local and religious councils have gone without pay for months.

"It is unacceptable that in a properly-functioning country employees go to work and don't get paid," said Eini. "The prime minister promised a complete solution and what I say is a complete solution, that means one of the last employees (is paid)."

The Israeli finance ministry says the wages of only 600 employees who work for municipalities that have consistently failed to collect taxes and other fees from residents are in arrears.

Last month, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced another thousand shekels by the union after he promised to resolve the unpaid wages crisis. AFP

Search continues for missing miners

RELATIVES of miners who perished in Monday's coal mine explosion react in the Siberian town of Novokuznetsk, some 230 km south of the regional center of Kemerovo, March 11. AFP/VITALY

KUZNECHTSOVA, MINE, SIBERIA—Huge water flying at half-mast Wednesday across Russia as a search was on for three miners still missing after a gas explosion claimed 187 lives in Russia's worst mining disaster since the Soviet era.

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday decreed a national day of mourning for Wednesday in memory of at least 175 people killed over the last four days in three separate disasters, also involving a deadly fire and a plane crash.

A spokesperson for the emergency situations ministry told AFP that the bodies of 187 people had been recovered, while another 93 miners who were underground when the explosion occurred had survived.

"We're hoping to find more people alive," Russian Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu, who was dispatched by Putin to oversee rescue operations, told reporters at the site on Tuesday.

However, early Wednesday he admitted that the search could take up to three days more, the latest his news agency reported.

At the Ulyanovskaya mine, located about 3,000 kilometers east of Moscow, hopes of finding more survivors at the Ulyanovskaya mine, located about 3,000 kilometers east of Moscow, hopes of finding more survivors was still alive seven days.

"The search is very difficult," said Sergei Cheremenov, a spokesperson for the governor of the region of Kemerovo, Russia's coal industry heartland where the mine is located, explaining that "there is bad ventilation, there is flooding and there was a lot of destruction."

Officials said that rescuers were working underground by hand and that divers were also being pressed into service in flooded sections of the mine.

Gennady Mikhalkin, a representative of the local branch of the emergency situations ministry, said rescuers working through the night had encountered minor, encouraging underground.

"A lot of people died and others we brought them up, they were all disconnected," said Mikhalkin, who looked exhausted as he stood drinking tea at an improvised encampment of emergency workers by the mine shaft.

Search and rescue operations were being conducted under tight security. About 300 soldiers and police backed by regular local police were posted around the facility.

In the mining town of Novokuznetsk, which has a population of some 600,000 people, families searched in vain as ambulances delivered loads of black body bags to a morgue.

Putin ordered Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov to launch an investigation into the tragedy, as well as into the deaths overnight Tuesday of 62 people at a retirement home in southern Russia and an air crash on Saturday that killed seven.

Prosecutors opened a criminal inquiry into violations of safety norms at Ulyanovskaya, which is operated by the firm Yuzhkuzbassugol that owns a dozen other mines in the region.

However, the mine was said by officials to be equipped with some of the most modern safety equipment available and was a showpiece for an initial public stock offering (IPO) planned for this year.

Yuzhkuzbassugol is a subsidiary of Russian metals giant Evraz.

The explosion occurred as the bulk of the mine's management were underground accompanying a visiting Swedish mediator reported to be inspecting the facility in connection with the planned IPO.

The Ulyanovskaya mine, which was opened five years ago, is located on a hill surrounded by a pine forest in a landscape dotted with chimneystacks and conveyor belts. AFP

N. Korea demands money before talks

BEIJING—NORTH KOREAN WOrker disarmament talks stalled again on Wednesday as Pyongyang refused to come to the negotiating table until $25 million in frozen funds were back in its coffers.

Planned meetings of the chief envoys to the six-nation talks on Wednesday morning did not take place, officials involved in the negotiations said. As North Korea insisted it would not talk until the money was safely returned.

"It is difficult for me at the moment to predict when the plenary meeting among the chief delegates will open today," chief South Korean envoy Chun Yung-Woo told reporters.

"It depends on North Korea ... If North Korea keeps insisting that it should not take part in the discussions at all before the transfer of the money is settled, although we have the necessary talks."

Authorities in Macau, where the money has been frozen since 2005 due to US accusations of North Korean money laundering and counterfeiting, said this week it would be released to a North Korean bank account.

But no one involved in the process has said when this will take place.

North Korea has repeatedly said it will not begin implementing a six-nation disarmament accord signed on Feb. 13 until the money is safely back in its hands.

The United States announced on Monday, at the start of the latest round of six-nation talks, that it had struck a deal with North Korea to end the dispute and the frozen money would be returned.

The United States insisted that it had received assurances from North Korea that the money would be used only for "humanitarian and educational purposes," however officials from Pyongyang have not said where the funds will go. AFP

Ecuador Congress replaces fired lawmakers

QUITO—ECUADOR'S CONGRESS replaced fired lawmakers and convened on Tuesday in an apparent victory for President Rafael Correa over opposition legislators raising his plans to curb their influence.

Correa, a left-winger elected in November, has been locked in a power struggle with lawmakers since March 7, when a court ordered 57 of them from the 100-member chamber for obstructing his plans for a referendum on rewriting the constitution.

The fired lawmakers had said they would seek to take their seats in the building, which was ringed by hundreds of police wielding batons to prevent a repeat of last week's clashes when opposition members rushed to force their way inside.

But Congress President Jorge Cevallos on Tuesday swore in 21 substitutes and allowed the legislature to hold a session without the fired lawmakers.

"We will obey the will of the people," substitute lawmaker Cesar Montucar told Congress media at least 51 lawmakers to hold a session and 33 were present.

Correa was monitoring developments and "hopes that Congress will start working in line with the people's demands," a government spokesperson said.

Fired lawmakers accused Correa of bribing their substitutes and seeking to reclaim their seats. They could still appeal the court decision and try to oversee it, experts said.

"We have to tell the world that a bribed Congress will never work," said Gloria Gallardo, a fired opposition lawmaker.

"They want an obedient Congress to bypass scrutiny," Herald in Montevideo, Correa is popular for promising to sweep away the influence of traditional political parties which many Ecuadoreans blame for the instability that has ousted three presidents in the last decade. Reuters

Glass-bottomed Skywalk opens over Grand Canyon

ASTRONAUT Buzz Aldrin and other VIP guests take the ceremonial first steps on the Skywalk at Grand Canyon West on the Hualapai Indian Reservation in Arizona, March 28. The $30 million glass-bottomed walkway juts out 70 feet from the rim at an elevation of 4,000 feet above the Colorado River.

HUALAPAI INDIAN RESERVATION, Arizona—A gleaming glass-bottomed walkway that juts out over the edge of the Grand Canyon welcomed its first visitors here Tuesday, with Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin taking one small step for man and one almighty leap for walkers of vertigo.

The Skywalk, a horseshoe-shaped observation deck extending 21 meters over the western lip of the vast natural chasm in the remote Hualapai Indian Reservation, about 320 kilometers east of Las Vegas, Nevada, allows tourists to peer straight down a dizzying 1,220 meters to the canyon floor below through 30-centimeter thick reinforced glass.

"It felt wonderful," said Aldrin, the second man to set foot on the moon after Neil Armstrong in the 1969 mission, after strolling around the walkway with members of the Hualapai tribe. "You actually floating on air or walking in space, but it was wonderful. It wasn't the least bit disturbing—at least not for some of us."

The Hualapai hope the Skywalk will help bring valuable tourist dollars to their impoverished corners of the Grand Canyon.

Architects say the gravity-defying structure is capable of supporting several hundred people simultaneously and will not be affected by powerful winds that often roar through the Grand Canyon.

Weighing roughly 880 tons, the walkway is constructed with layers upon layers of reinforced glass and is supported by massive steel bolts that have been driven 14 meters into surrounding bedrock. Guests must wear shoe covers also will prevent the scratches from quivering under the weight of visitors, authorities say.

The project, which took two years to complete, is the latest example of Native American tribes seeking to generate revenue through tourism. The Hualapai are hoping that the Skywalk will persuade visitors to come to their remote section of the Grand Canyon, which previously struggled to lure tourists with its Old West-style villages and tours.

The Skywalk was dreamed up by Shanghai-born businessman David Jin. The Las Vegas-based investment is reported to have bankrolled construction of the $30-million project and under a deal with the Hualapai will collect upwards half of the revenues from ticket sales over the next 25 years to recoup his investment.

Tickets for the Skywalk, which opens to the public on March 28, will cost about $25.

But construction of the project has been criticized by some Hualapai members and environmentalists, with several Hualapai medicine men and AFP leave Tuesday they had mixed feelings about the project.

"I'd say most Hualapai are opposed to it," said Jim Havasupai, 46, a tour guide. "It's hard to accept. It's sacred ground for us and we are disturbing it. But in the other hand I think people will grow to accept it if they can see that our children will benefit from tourism."

Wilfred Whatoname, meanwhile, said he was dismayed that the Skywalk had been built overlooking Eagle Point, a dramatic geological formation shaped like a sweeping eagle. According to ancient tribal beliefs, the spirit of the Hualapai's ancestors rises upwards from the gorges surrounding the landmark.

"It's taking away from our Eagle, our sacred land," said Whatoname. "I was opposed to it, but since I think we have to accept it it is going to provide jobs for our children."

Charlie Vaughn, the chairman of the Hualapai tribal council, said members of the tribe had not complained when the project was first unveiled. AFP

Singapore woman jailed for online dating scam

SINGAPORE—A HOMELESS Singaporean woman who used a male alias to online dating scam and conned him into giving her about $43,000 after the pretended to marry him, was jailed for six months on Monday, court documents showed.

Malika Parmo, 36, used a fake name and photographs of Bollywood actress Gayatri Joshi when she began an online relationship with Bhamat Indrot, an Indian national living in the United States, according to the Straits Times newspaper.

After Parmo promised in 2004 to marry Indrot, she asked him to send her a total of about $43,000 for her mother's funeral expenses, and for a friend's wedding, according to the court documents.

Indrot eventually grew suspicious of Parmo when she asked for more money and filed a police report in Singapore, the Straits Times said.

The paper added that Parmo's husband had also checked and struck up an online relationship until the police came to their apartment to arrest her in August. Reuters

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibanez

5 Asian rivers at risk of dying

GENEVA—FIVE RIVERS IN ASIA SERVING OVER 870 MILLION PEOPLE ARE among the most threatened in the world, as dams, water extraction and climate change all take their toll, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said.

The Yangtze, Saluween, Ru, Indus, Ganges and Mekong Lancang rivers studying half of the WWF's "top ten" most threatened river basins, which "either already suffer most grievously under the weight of these threats or are bracing for the heaviest impacts," the organization said.

Also on the list are the Rio Grande/Bravo and Usumacinta in Latin America, the Danube in central Europe, the Rift Lake Victoria in Africa and the Murray-Darling in Australia.

"Ready examples in the world [exist in a river basin and] everybody has a contribution to make" to prevent further environmental damage, the director of WWF's Global Freshwater Program Jamie Pittock told AFP.

The threats facing river basins are varied and interlinked, and require holistic policies rather than efforts that target just one aspect but can end up being counterproductive, he said.

For example, "as governments become concerned about climate change (releasing water) from hydropower [which] needs dams to store more water, which then results in more water being released from the dams and so builds up more ecological problems," Pittock said.

Many governments are also increasing on hydroelectric power plants as a "clean" source of energy, but the issues more dams which store water flows and left off the populations, he added.

The WWF report highlighted increase extraction, dams and climate change as the most overwhelming threats that will have the most impact on people, though invasive species and pollution also pose serious problems.

Dave Hoisting is the main threat facing the Mekong, while dams and industrial water projects imperil freshwater habitats in the Salween, La Plata and Danube basins, the report added. AFP

A BOY walks through a parched bed of a polluted river on eve of "World Water Day" in Hyderabad, India, Wednesday, March 21.

Global warming set to deepen thirst for water

PARIS—FRESH WATER, THE STUFF of life, is set to become even more precious as global warming begins to bite, experts were ahead of World Water Day on Thursday.

The climate of this year's event is no cause for worry, a problem inevitably driven by population explosion, chronic wastage and pollution.

The UN estimates that, by 2025, two-thirds of the planet's population will be living with water stress, with North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia the worst-affected regions.

But global warming is bound to accentuate the scarcity, say experts.

Arctic regions, greater aridity risk.

Melting rainfall patterns and dwindling runoff from snow and ice in mountains may badly deplete rivers, lakes and aquifers.

In contrast, other regions will get more rainfall—but this may take the form of fewer torrential that cause flash floods rather than a rainfall steadily that sinks into the ground.

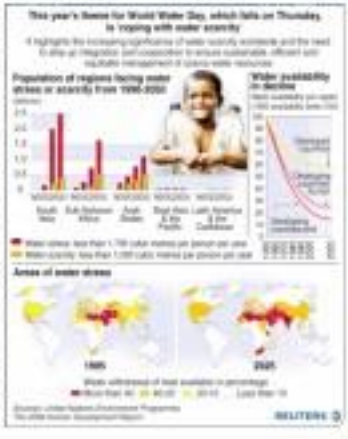
Other gauges could trawled to show that are spatially populated or where there is no infrastructure for capturing and storing it for use during the spells.

Scientists at the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are due to highlight the phenomenon in a report, due to be released in Brussels on April 6. It is the second volume in a long-awaited assessment on global warming.

In higher latitudes and some mountainous, including populous areas of East and Southeast Asia, water availability is "very likely" to increase over the century, according to the latest draft of the report, seen by AFP.

But scientists in the mid-latitudes and dry tropics, which are already water-stressed, would have less water.

"Drought-affected areas will likely increase and extreme precipitation events, which are likely to increase in frequency and intensity, will augment flood risk," according to the document, which is still being finalized. AFP



HOME DEVELOPMENT MUTUAL FUND

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Provision of Air Conditioning Units at Pag-IBIG Fund Branch Offices and Corporate Headquarters

The **Pag-IBIG Fund**, through its Bids and Awards Committee on Goods and Services (BAC-GS) intends to apply Pursuant of Four Million Seven Hundred Sixty-Five Thousand Five Hundred Seventeen Pesos and 10/100 (Php 4,765,517.10) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to prospective under the contract for the Provision of Air Conditioning Units at the following Pag-IBIG Fund offices:

- Imus Branch: GUMA Building, Aguinaldo Highway, Imus, Cavite
- Makati Branch: Justine Building, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City
- Corporate Headquarters: Room 202-203, Atrium Building, Makati Ave., Makati City

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

The Pag-IBIG Fund now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the Provision of Air Conditioning Units at above Branches/Offices. Delivery of the EQUIPS is required 8 weeks from receipt of the Notice to Proceed. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents. ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary PASSED/fail, criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part II, (RA 9184), Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138/R.A. 138. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification process.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the BAC-GS Secretariat, Room 104, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City, and inspect the Bidding Documents from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, starting March 22, 2007.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the BAC-GS Secretariat, Room 104, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (Php 5,000.00) to the Pag-IBIG Fund Cashier. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The **Pag-IBIG Fund** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on March 29, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. at Room 602, Amir Tabunan Hall, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered on or before April 10, 2007, 9:00 a.m. to the BAC-GS Secretariat at Room 104, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City, All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and in the amount indicated in Section III of the Bidding Documents. Bid Data Sheet. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be on April 11, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. at Room 602, Amir Tabunan Hall, Atrium of Makati, Makati Ave., Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

The Pag-IBIG Fund reserves the rights to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to waive all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

For further inquiries and/or information, please call Messrs. Wilfredo Nacilo S. Reyes and Jose Maria M. Diaz at 8714222, 8845875 to 77 or visit our Corporate Website at http://www.pagibigfund.gov.ph or e-mail us at pmd@pagibigfund.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **EMMA LINDA G. FARIA**
Senior Vice President
Technical Support and
Chair, Bids and Awards Committee
Goods and Services

Largest urban forest threatened

MUMBAI—A PROTECTED JUNGLE filled as the world's largest urban national park in India's financial capital is being encroached, built over and damaged in a rapidly growing city, takes a toll on the forest's diverse flora and fauna.

The 104-square-kilometer bigger than New York's Central Park, the Sanjay Gandhi National Park on the northern city of Mumbai is home not only to about 20 adult leopards and hundreds of kinds of animals and birds, but also about 20,000 people, many of whom are involved in illegal forest activities.

As India observed World Forestry Day on Wednesday, authorities and experts expressed concern at the development of new residential blocks that have blurred the divisions between the city and the countryside to accommodate Mumbai's expanding population of 17 million.

"The sense this green lung of Mumbai the forest has to be rid of encroachers, and building activities around it have to be monitored," said Kailash Bisen, the national park's assistant conservator.

"This is the world's largest national park within city limits and it is unique and vital." The efforts of urban development on the 104 sq km (40 sq miles) forest are easy to see.

In 2004, at least 14 people were killed in attacks by leopards in Mumbai after their shrinking habitat forced them to stray from the nation's park and enter nearby neighborhoods.

At least 47 escaping leopards were caught in 2004 and 2005 and plans are afoot to release them in the wild with electromagnetic chips in their bodies that they would be tracked and permanently locked up if they attacked people again.

It is illegal to kill leopards, an endangered species in Africa and Asia often hunted for their fur.

The Mumbai national park's predicament is part of a larger problem facing India which is struggling to save its forests and endangered animals such as the tiger. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molendres

■ Tiger, Federer play in Miami —but not against each other /A29

Solis ready to shock the world

MEXICAN JORGE SOLIS, REACHING FOR the fight of his life, will have gone through the best training available when he battles the iconic Manny Pacquiao at the Alamodome on April 15 in San Antonio, Texas.

The lanky Solis (32-0-2, 22 KOs) of Guadalajara, Mexico will try to wrest the World Boxing Council international super featherweight title of Pacquiao (57-3-2, 33 KOs) in the main event of the pay-per-view extravaganza dubbed "Titans of Glory" and promoted by Top Rank Inc.

"I know people are saying Pacquiao is in for an easy fight, but I'm undefeated

BOXING /A27

Marquez must square off vs Pacquiao first–WBC

NEW WORLD BOXING COUNCIL SUPER featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez should first face Manny Pacquiao before taking on Mexico Antonio Barrera in a rematch.

"Rules are rules, and definitely state that there must be a mandatory defense, and we are going to push for that. The next fight for Juan Manuel Marquez will be against Manny Pacquiao if Manny defeats Jorge Solis," declared NBC president Aris Sulaiman in a talk with Junior Bicera of Bomboradyo yesterday.

The development came on the heels of reports that Golden Boy Promotions has sought a court injunction to stop Pacquiao's scheduled fight against the undefeated Mexican Solis on April 14 at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas.

But a noted LA boxing expert who is a lawyer called the chance of the fight being scuttled by the courts as "slim and none."

MARQUEZ

PACQUIAO

"The chances are slim and none and, as Bob Arum," wrote boxing confidentiality resident lawyer and editor Michael Marley.

He warned, however, that although the injunction may not halt the bout altogether, it might affect other aspects of the promotion.

"The Top Rank card will go on as scheduled April 14 although the news about GBP's seeking to put a restraining halt on the card may hurt Arum with potential sponsors and other third parties who do not want to get dragged into the matter," Marley said.

"There is also a chance that GBP could get some of Top Rank's income from the HBO shows to freeze backup," added Marley, a veteran observer of the fight scene.

PHILSPORTS /A 27

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Eagle meet starts Int'l Pairs elims

THE PHILIPPINE ELIMINATIONS FOR THE Lufthansa International Pairs tournament start on Saturday with members of the golf Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club in Gen. Trias, Cavite, competing the first bracket slot.

More than 30 member-member pairs have signed up for the first of a series of 18-hole qualifiers leading to the grand finals where Eagle Ridge will take host on May 20.

Lufthansa will fly flying the Philippine pair and its entourage

to St. Andrews in Scotland for the world 8-ball, where they will compete against 31 countries on July 1-5.

"We're delighted to have obtained good response from private clubs and we're looking forward to co-existing summer of International Pairs events," said Niki Gomez, part of last year's winning pair who is now the event director for Asia.

Gomez recently forged an agreement with Lufthansa for the European carrier to title sponsor the inaugural Philippine qualifier of the International Pairs.

Lufthansa will take raffle off a trip to St. Andrews, Scotland for all the participants of the tourney. Another major bracket, Callaway through its local distributor Electrolux Corporation, will provide gift certificates to all the carrier before tee-off.

Aside from the once-in-a-lifetime chance to fly to Scotland and play in the renowned home of golf for free, the main attraction of the International Pairs is its format. Dont ball with handicap, which gives everybody an equal chance of winning.

Other clubs which have scheduled their respective qualifiers are Baliu (April 14), Alabang (April 21), Clubhouse (April 28) and Royal Southwoods (May 5).

"For duffers or weekend players, playing at St. Andrews and wearing the national colors against rival countries in an Olympic atmosphere are goals that seem so hard to reach, an impossible dream," said tourney event director Emily Gondoza. "The International days will bring them closer to that dream."

For inquiries, call Orlando Sweza Management at 8342444 look for Arlene or Bets.

RP 4 behind Koreans in Sirikit Cup

By Manong R. Carello

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—Regina de Guzman has been labeled a promising talent for so long that she could not wait to finally don a Philippine uniform.

And she did not waste the first chance she got.

The 20-year-old rookie teamed up Beryl a steady one under par 71 in difficult conditions yesterday and became the surprise spearhead as host Philippines surged in the third of the fight after 18 holes of the 29th Queen Sirikit Cup.

"I'm so happy that I shot the round that I did because I was so eager to play for the start of the day," De Guzman told the inquirer. "But when there's the 18-hole tears, I'm happy that we are in third and still in range."

"Sa 2nd round will go better for the rounds tomorrow and the next."

Iremio Ayhina, the rookie aired 73 yourself who is the veteran in the team, shot a level 72 to send target The Country Club as the Philippines took third with a 142 total aside the three in play two to assert format.

Ayi Su-wen, the Asian Games gold medalist in Doha, Qatar last year, fired with a 69 and Chai Hi-yung added a 70 to propel the ROK-ASEANcus squad to a 278 aggregate and a one-shot lead over Australia.

Stephanie Na matched Ayin 69 and Emma Stewart added a 73 for Australia. A stroke behind the Philippines was New Zealand whose 144 was built around Simon Lee's 71 and Penny Smethurst's 73.

"Anything can still happen," Arden said the Inquirer in Filipino. "The course was very tricky today and we all felt how hard it played. If we can gain ground tomorrow by getting two under par scores, then I think we have a good chance."

Grand Legend, the third RP lee, struggled with an 84.

The Philippines has never won the event also known as the Asia-Pacific Ladies team championship and the country's thirteen this year have been laid down on the shoulders of the three women who are donning that they are up to the task.

De Guzman, who was a student for Jayvee Agojo during the Southeast Asian Games in 2005, finished with bodies on 10 and 17, the back-to-back birdie for the day against four bogeys, three of them coming on the front side.

Bellen was one under until the bogeyed No. 28, where she missed the green by 50 yards then flubbed an eight-footer for par.

Ryu, who was 20 under par in winning the Doha gold medal, landed one of her first best holes on the back nine and finished birdie-birdie-par for the 69 which put her in front of the individual race together with Ha.

Reigning JGV Ladies' champion Yupaporn Kwanjaikaew was only good for a 79 that counted behind Thitiporn Amornsupparerk 71 as Thai. and Grand shot 8 bogeys of the par until a 1-99.

The Taiwanese never got it going, ending up 14 shots off to ninth spot with a 153 at ten Yeh Ke-Chen carded a 76 and Hsieh Yu-ning a 77.

DOTTIE Ardina wears after winning a spot at Subic No. 9.

HEISHE de Guzman (Indonesia) rides.

2ND YOUNG MARKET MASTERS AWARDS

ymma

From left to right, Jessie De Vendilez, YMMA 8, Cloyd Tuazon, Co-Founder & Chief Advocacy Officer, Marsteller & Action Inc.; Montalat Monreal-De Jesus, Advisory Account Manager, Unilever; Carla Chantal Javier Banco Manager, Manila AMEC; Bing Tecson, Category Manager, Lufthansa; Oscar Gomez, Category Director & Head of Marketing Training, Unilever; Carolyn Alabastro-Ong, VP for Marketing & Products, Coca-Cola; Arlene Mangaoang-Bolante, Publisher, Summit Media; Jane Rosas, Senior Marketing Manager, Smart;

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Congratulations to the young marketing achievers.

The Young Market Masters Awards (YMMA) seeks to acknowledge the country's outstanding marketing and sales managers who are 35 years old and below. It aims to encourage and motivate bright, young minds to be innovative brand-builders and excel in the competitive world of marketing. This year, YMMA is proud to present seven young achievers who can inspire the youth to reach new heights in marketing and entrepreneurship.

Awards night: March 22, 2007 Mandarin Oriental Hotel Ballroom

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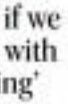
PANA

'I'll exile myself if we return with nothing'

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

TO MY (infinite!), my blood sugar had plummeted to hypoglycemic levels when I awoke yesterday morning. The gloominess flashed. "Uh-oh, get call doctor." But reading was an effort, so I went before the mirror first.

Lest I parent me, I immediately downed a glassful of sweet orange juice and munched on a couple of sunshine crackers to boost my sugar level. Despite my condition, I was determined to keep my appointment that day.

Feeling better by 10 a.m., I started out for the Dentists' Seminary at the Luneta to catch the PBA forum where the RP-Indonesia Centro wars bound for Jakarta, Indonesia for the Stella Cinturajaya Cup qualifier was going to be presented.

***

The guests, led by Harbour Centre owners Hilkat Romero, came in full force. The entourage included PBL commissioner Chino Trinidad and his executive staff Tommy Ong and Butch Montoya; PBA chairman Ed Angeles of Toyota Otis; team manager Bernard Yang, head coach Jamel Bacoll and assistants Jorge Gallent, Louie Alas, Lawrence Bourgeois and Ato Sison and the players.

Erick Arejola, one of the two appointed team managers, couldn't make it because his wife's baby was scheduled to give birth that day.

Everyone was thrilled that RSP-SSF president Manny V. Pangilinan had accepted the invitation to join the group, a gesture that he was giving the amateurs his support and blessing. It was the first time the interconnections of the magnate opposed to a cagers's forum.

***

The guest were upbeat. Everyone was excited about the country's very first international competition following two years of suspension by the FIBA.

In its upcoming terms, MVP made it clear that the only option was to win, while Chino expressed full confidence on his players, saying that he expects them to bring home the bacon.

With his reputation at stake, having been tagged as the boy who grabbed the Philippine basketball, Hilkat swore he would raise himself to Nigeria with import Julius Nwosu should the Harbour team return empty-handed.

"Let's bring back the glory," he said, as he appealed for the full support of media and all concerned.

Because there were so many questions raised, the lively session stretched way past 12 noon.

And because everyone was looking very hungry, Hilkat decided to treat all those left behind for lunch at the nearby Emerald Garden.

The invitation was extended to MVP but he begged off because he had a previous commitment. Instead, MVP promised to treat us to lunch at a popular restaurant in Ateneo where gourmet food is served.

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There was one question majority or perhaps all of the media wanted answered, but they were disappointed. They wanted to know how much Inquirer was going to pay for the coverage, the payper view—and other related matters.

Solar CEO Peter Chumbing said it was a business secret. He made it clear though, that Fastman was "worth every penny of it," but that Solar's marketing department will have to work double time to at least break even with that kind of investment.

Not everyone happy with PBA 'gaming'

By Macong R. Castillo

WHETHER IT'S FOR FUN AND IT'S INTERESTING or not, gaming will involve money in the Philippine Basketball Association does not sit well with those who share pure love for the game.

Most people believe that it will destroy the purity of the game and that the sport, one of the longest for that matter—can stand on it's own.

"Let's just enjoy the game e," Jose-nino PBA MVP Alvin Patrimonio told the Inquirer last night. "Whether it is P1 or P100,000, anytime you place money on the table, it is still considered a form of gambling.

"We need to work hard for our money, not earn it through other means."

The business entered session at the Araneta Coliseum last night within a regular double header of the Fiesta Cup was going on, and asked around for reactions of some fans and those who know the game and the league well regarding the newest money-making machine of the league.

"It's not a good idea in my opinion," said Ateneo Francisco, the Physical Education director at Santa Teresa and a member of the Ateneo Board. "Whether this is gaming or gambling, it will teach the students to use easy or an-

INTIMIDADO

BERNARDINO

swers rather than derived from the results of PBA games.

As observers, tie-based games that could produce extra income for the government and the PBA. "Hindi kaya" has two games: Winning Eight and Point Spread.

Interested persons can join by buying an eGames prepaid cards then testing their courage. Cards are available in P500, P600 and P1,000 denominations in various outlets. Each every combination costs P10. A tester will just predict the last digit of the scores of the leading teams per quarter in Winning Eight.

Winning numbers in Winning Digit are worth P25,000 for first to fourth quarters, P5,000 for second to fourth quarters and P500 for third to fourth.

"In my own opinion, problem do more that this PBA may away from it," said retired PBA commissioner Jun Bernardino over the phones. "Gaming per se has no problem, but the moment has so many negative connotations.

"It will be hard to explain what differences the words gaming and gambling have and it will affect a lot of negative reactions."

The committee resulted a time during his term when he and his staff had thought of coming up with a game that would legalize the "betting" game going on in the streets.

But one ride in an elevator inside a park hotel located in attend a meeting and with the opponent setting high on what the "winning ending" combination would be for the coming games made him change his mind and ditch the idea altogether.

"I am not in a position to condemn the PBA," Bernardino said. "But I would rather see that the PBA, is being the NBA, not get involved (in any forms of gambling)."

"Hala Bumpa" will go on for the duration of the Fiesta Cup.

Harbour gets Chot invite; Nwosu due

By Jarmine W. Payo

HARBOUR CENTRE-PHILIPPINES IS READY TO ROLL up its sleeves and buckle down to serious work with 6-foot-8 import Julius Nwosu expected to arrive late this week and with national coach Chot Reyes extending an invitation to the PBL selection to join the RP squad practices.

Reyes, who handles the country's preparations for a shot at an Olympic berth, yesterday opened the all-professional squad's practice sessions to the amateur team set to see action in the International Indoor Basketball Association Global Champions Cup in Albany.

"They can join us any time," said Reyes. "I think we should sit down pretty soon. We don't have to play just name up games. If they want, we can practice together."

The offer, though, will only stand for a week as Reyes and his 11 man roster leave for a Centro City basketball camp for a two-week training in the United States. The squad will take the 9 p.m. Philippine Airlines flight on March 29 and are expected to arrive in Los Angeles at 6 p.m.

"Everything is open, even (the services of) our conditioning coach (Dennis Aurilla), if they need him," he added.

RSP-Swamburg, bankrolled by Philippine president Manny V. Pangilinan-controlled Mobile Phone Inc. would rather hold on to Nwosu with import Julius Nwosu should the Harbour team return empty-handed.

"Let's bring back the glory," he said, as he appealed for the full support of media and all concerned.

Because there were so many questions raised, the lively session stretched way past 12 noon.

And because everyone was looking very hungry, Hilkat decided to treat all those left behind for lunch at the nearby Emerald Garden.

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MVP(L) to Gilbert Arriola or Saturday guard from the Philippine Christian University.

Harbour Centre owner and team 8-rancher Hilkat Romero said it will be a month of intense training for Harbour Centre-Philippines.

"Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia had years to prepare, while we only have a month," said Romero.

Silverio, Jacobs lead 10 'Hall' inductees

TWO SEVERED COACHES WITH CONTRASTING styles along with eight other personalities were elected yesterday to the Philippine Basketball Association's Hall of Fame.

Danny Silverio and Ben Jacobs, both coaching legends in their own right, were the hands-down choices by the seven members honors committee which selected this second batch of the inductees into the Hall.

Silverio, the well-dressed coach-artist of the now defunct Toyota Corollas, won five PBA championships while Jacobs was acknowledged to have revolutionized coaching in the Philippines. He also registered the first two coaching victories in the PBA while coaching the national team which played under the Northern Consolidated banner past Manila Beer in the Reinforced Conference Finals in 1985.

Also gaining the nod of the committee were Cesar Concio, Abet Guanzon, Norman Black and Manny Pacquiao (posthumous). Dominador Tolosa and Edmundo Campomayor Jr. (league officials) and Tony Siddayao and Philippe Pangan (referee).

Three players in the league as small center for 11 seasons with four different teams and averaged 12.6 points and 7.0 rebounds in 473 games. He was named to the PBA's first-ever Mythical 5 and earned the distinction as "Clean man of the Board" despite his height.

Meanwhile, were the first head players to score 60 points in 7-Up's 121-136 loss to Tanduay in 1977. He averaged 22.3 points in 39 games in 1977. During his eight seasons, Flamenco scored 50 points four times, 40 points in six games and 30 points over eight games. He played for Gino, 7-Up, Toyota and Galerie Dominique.

Goldsbery was one of only six players to win the MVP award at least twice in 1982 and 1985. He ranks second in the league's all-time list for most total rebounds and most defensive rebounds and only to Ramon Fernandez.

CHAMPIONS: DLSP-Mt Carmi topped the Hercules Division F championship. (Standing from left) Elmer Acuna, Angel Magbalang, Red Lara, Ramel Pigtis, William Fong, playing team manager Wil Fong, Al Sidhark, playing coach Jun Estacio. (Seated from left) Louie Lao, Jerome Tierra, Bong Alas, Jeffrey De Guzman, Boy Silvano (mascot), DJ Perlas and Mario Tejano.

Marquez must face Pacquiao

From page A-23

Indies, it was announced at Os Marquez that was past fight press conference that a rematch has already been inked for September on the week of the Christmas Independence Day.

"Golden Boy is doing well by trying to have a fight that will answer the people. But you know Pacquiao is also a very attractive fight, and the WBC will support the (Marquez-Barrera) rematch, but first, we have to defend the titles," Fahlman pointed out.

Fahlman added that while he saw Marquez the winner over Barrera by "not more than two points," he was not in agreement with the scores of the three judges, who had Marquez the winner by much bigger margins than what had estimate been a tightly competitive bout.

Marquez's associates, Ben 'Wahoo' Salud, in an exclusive interview yesterday, also confirmed that he received the WBC's letter addressed to Pacquiao, reminding the the Filipino to confirm his acceptance of being the mandatory challenger to Marquez.

Salud said that the WBC is giving Pacquiao until Friday, March 23, to inform the WBC in writing of his desire to take on Marquez for the WBC title.

Marquez is also expected to decide within the next few days on which belt he chooses to retain, as he also holds the WBO featherweight crown. But it is almost certain that he will choose the WBC title as he is apparently more comfortable in the super featherweight (130lbs) limit.

Salvon L. Jagandoog, contributor

Solis ready to shock the world, forge upset vs Filipino ring icon

From page A-23

and I will be prepared to deliver the best performance of my career so I can get the biggest piece of my career," said Solis, in a press release given out to media men by Top Rank.

To prepare for Pacquiao, Solis has been forced to come out of his comfort zone and train in the high mountains of Mexico, which he has not done in the past.

"This fight is very special, very important and we felt we need to get stronger and be in superb condition to win it," added Solis, who is expressively accompanied in the mountains by his world champion brother Ulises Solis and his father Aurelio, who both serve as his trainers.

"I never really stop running. I keep to good shape in between fights, but for this fight I have been running with high intensity for four weeks now with the last two weeks here in the mountains," said Solis.

Working on his strength and conditioning in a mountain trail that included the highly regarded Food Bolivia, who has worked with Erik Morales, Antonio Margarito and Alex "Terra" Garcia.

"I don't expect an easy fight against Pacquiao. He is very strong and fights at a very fast pace. That's why we have been working on my strength and conditioning to match for this fight, we intend to be strong for the whole 12 rounds," said Solis.

Du Pacquiao's arms come Mexican opponents Solis said: "I know everyone thinks that all Mexicans fight alike, but we don't. We all have different styles and personalities and all of that shows in the way we fight in the ring."

"I know my boxing skills are going to be the key to my victory. I don't expect this to be easy but this is my opportunity to break in the big time. I am very motivated to make a splash and shock the world," said Solis.

Pacquiao, meanwhile, has started training at the Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles, and is expected to reach around peak form by the end of the month.

Pacquiao had started sparring in General Santos City before departing for the US last Saturday. Salvon L. Jagandoog, contributor

Olympic buildup starts next month

By Marc Anthony Reyes

WITH ONLY THE RUNNING OF THE Hood Incentrowmen being awaited, some 22 national athletes from their reports this Philippines are set to fly to China early next month to start their buildup for the Beijing Olympics.

The China training was earlier agreed by the three-man committee composed of Philippine Sports Commission chair Jolly Gomez, Philippine Olympic Committee secretary general Jose Clemente and POC Mike Arroyo.

Ramirez, Hontiveros and a representative of Mr. Arroyo met yesterday to finalize the list of athletes and coaches, who will form the first batch of the Olympic hopefuls who will be deployed to training camps around the world.

However, Hontiveros said they could not give the names of the athletes bound for China as yet. The Beijing-bound athletes will come from weight, lifting, diving and weightlifting.

The four sports are included in the 14 priority disciplines that were earlier determined by officials and will enjoy funding from the PO Foundation between now and the Beijing Games in August 2008.

Arroyo and Ramirez are also set to meet with Chinese sports officials to establish goodwill as well as identify the training camps where the national athletes will stay.

There are between 36 and 55 athletes included in the priority sports under the PO Foundation's Olympic training program. The estimated budget for them is seeking to P250 million.

The top bets in taekwondo and boxing will be based at home following the request of their respective national sports associations although they have set a series of overseas training and competitions for the 14-month period.

The track and field athletes will train in the United States along with beach volleyball hero who are mostly Fil-Americans.

The swimmers will train in Japan and in the US as several trackers are already based there. Divers in evening will also go to Japan, the divers are to be training the archers in Korea and gymnasts in Russia.

RAMIREZ

POLO FOR A CAUSE: John Zobel goes for the ball during the first Panasonic Polo Cup for a Cause at the Alabang Country Club. Bobbie Aguirre, Anthony and Adrian Garcia are active for the Black team while the Green will be joined by Jun Jalvo, Tonio Veloso, Anthony Fleenor and Sonny Barrameda. (B-4, in the high goal match. Rene Almeda, president of Panasonic Phils., Dr. Seng Ahlec, president of the Philippine General Foundation, and Cory Quirino give out the awarding ceremonies. The two-goal game was played by teams Jun Escobio, Jay de Jesus, Gus Aguirre and Phil Fast (Red) and Edwin Arce, Cole Aguirre, Jimboy Bulay and Jerome Hernandez (Blue). KIDS SPORTS

Foreign bets due for Moto

THE 2007 PUERTO PRINCESA CITY Homecoming Masters of Asia BMI-UAM Asian Snooker Championships is now a scant high of 13 nations participating in the country's highly-awaited biggest snooker open tourney set to unfold March 24-25 at the Puerto Princesa City Sports Coliseum.

India was the latest to confirm with the addition of Karan Gautam in the runner-player Asian Pro U23 division of this event supported by the City of Puerto Princesa, Metro 2000, Oakley, the Philippine Sports Commission and Asian regional promoter of event Victor Pino's Philippines.

Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn said that it's all systems go for the Asian Snooker kickoff. Aside from host Philippines, the other countries that have earlier confirmed were Dubai, Mongolia, Thailand, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Australia, Guam, Japan, United Kingdom, Indonesia and China.

The build-up of the delegations is set to arrive today and they start heading for Puerto Princesa City Thursday.

For details, email mastersa@hotmail.com or call 0917-8992263 or visit www.mastersa.org.

Valencia trips Quezon in NBC meet

Jomie Salig
7 p.m. — Game at Batasan

VALENCIA CITY—VALENCIA COLLEGE Harness thwarted visiting Quezon Villa Antipo-ripe but rallied in the playoff period to hack out an 82-77 victory Tuesday night in the 2007 NBC National Cup basketball tournament at the packed gym here.

Dennis Concha knocked in 26 points while Rocky Chard and Mac Cruz added 17 each as Mayor Ann Galindo Jr.'s cagers started hot in the community-based meeting.

With Concha and Chard delivering the goods, Valencia entered a 10-point lead, 22-31, in the last three minutes of the third quarter and then withstood fierce rallies by Quezon Gov. Wilfredo Mamegeto cagers to pull the shock win.

Elmore Bonanci, the 2003 Rookie of the Year, went scoreless after limping out with a sprained ankle in the third quarter, but another Valencia rookie, Ian Salvadego, came to the rescue by scoring 12 points.

"The Quezon players are all veterans, but we were able to find them off," said Valencia coach Neil Tugaby.

The scores:

Valencia (82)—Concha 26, Cruz 17, Chard 17, Salvadego 12, Atienza 6, Bolan 4, Cruz 2, Dragon 0, Maravillosa 0, Bonanci 0, Blanco 0

Quezon (77)—Jalen 15, Sumanaotao 12, Hon. Mendoza 8, Ramos 8, De Leon 8, Venegas 6, Ramos 4, Gonzales 2, Aguirre 2, Jose 1, Zuniga 0

Quarters: 20-22, 42-43, 61-61, 82-77

SPORTSWATCH

Mighty Filter Kings gain semis

THE MIGHTY FILTER KINGS CONTINUED THEIR TORRID RUN TO CLINCH A SEMIfinals berth in the Amateur Basketball Association (ABA) Championship recently at the Andres Soriano Jr. Memorial Gymnasium in Makati. Dan Gallapite and Randy Chua scored ten apiece as the Mighty Filter Kings subdued their seventh win in eight games to bag the elimination round. The 6-foot-4 Gallapite added to game-high 21 points while Chua and Kit Dichaves added 13 and 14 points, respectively. After the win, Coach Jun Magsino said the Mighty Filter Kings are "peaking at the right time" as they are now riding a five-game winning streak in the fourth-seed berth in the eight-team tournament. The Mighty Filter Kings aim at gaining for them an overall straight championship in the league that lured some of the top names from the Philippine community. Last recently, they captured the MET Division II title.

Pichay Visayas Chess Extravaganza

THE MAYOR ALEX PICHAY OF BACOLOD CITY, PHILIPPINES (PHOTO), FLANKED BY Bacolod-born Filipino Grandmaster Rogelio Barcia and Bacolod City Mayor Alex Pichay, Jr. and Sugbu-based Filipino Woman Grandmaster Mayla Abraham "Tamdan" Jr. Arabes, has agreed to hold a three-card chess competition in the Visayas beginning March 26. Dubbed "Pichay Visayas Chess Extravaganza", the tournament will kick off in San Jose, Antique on March 25-29 with P100,000 at stake. A part undertaking of Pichay-led Cities Daily Press, the event is open to all listed and unlisted players from all over the country. The organizers are also already sure that there's always at P50,000, according to Antique sports coordinator Romulo Jr. in Iloilo. The Pichay Chess Extravaganza will also be held in Iloilo City and Boracay. For inquiries, call/text SM Cesar Caballa at 0929-1122339 or WBmaster at 0905-4606132.

Las Pinas cockfest fires off today

SMALL TIME COCKERS, MICO-MAN SIZE CHICKENHAWKS OF METRO MANILA south of Las Pinas Coliseum when the famed Mini One-Cock Fundraiser fires off at noon today. Hosts Hector Tandoc and Simon Enrile said that the event are champion will be chosen after every ten fights and will contain P1/3,000 A 14" cock by penalty the overall fastest and champion in bonus. Another fastest after every ten fights and will contain P100,000 in guaranteed prize at stake. Tickets are listed A and General group.

SJC Cockers Club features 60 fights

MORE THAN 60 QUALITY FIGHTS WILL SPICE UP THE FIFTH LEG of the SJC Cockers Club 4-cock derby' series today at San Jose Coliseum. Midway into the Cocker of the Year race, a fiery showdown looms among pacesetters Rodolfo Pineda, Blackboy Diano, Bobby Nicolas, Mayor Salvador Perez, Tessy Viernes, Sam Mendoza, Quang Ante Cruz, Louie Cruz, Boy-de-Vera, Mario Espinosa and Raymond Velayo. Still in contention are Emil Chua, Bobby Dumawal, Tony Manalastas, Erwin Nito, Ed Agustin, Capt. Dante Gonzales, Wago Nicdao, Alex Cayabyab, Brg. Danny Lagbas, Mario Garcia and Gayle Bendaros. The inspection (32) 538-9440 (32) 436-6563 or (0917-4644585) (Mabuhay).

2 Fil-Germans head Davao triathlon finds

OLSHA HALL OF FAME: De La Salle Alumni Association presidents' Junction Sarmenta inducts new members of the DLSAA Hall of Fame during its alumni homecoming dubbed as GREENeration recently at DLSU-Taft campus. (From left) Bro. Rolando Olivan, FSC fraternal and local sports DLPIs, Consejo Sara (shooting), Antonio Aldaguer (rowing), DLSAA vice president for honors and awards, Manuel Blanco; DLSPI president Bro. Armin Luistro; Amadeo Velasco (representing footballer Federico Velasco), Gervasio and Miguel Pryzter (golf).

THE SPEEDO-NATIONAL AGE Group Triathlon (NAGT) 2007 Series, which had its inaugural event on Sunday in Davao City, has produced a couple new national triathletes in Fil-Germans Andrea and Markus Reimel.

Triathlon Association of the Philippines (Tap) president Tom Carrasco, who graced the event also handed out 98 participants from as far as Cagayan De Oro, Cebu, Laguna and Mati in Davao Oriental, nail metres, 10, and blacken, 16, will be sent to Manila for diagnostic training under former national champion and now Tap technical coach Joel de Leon.

Carrasco awarded the prizes to the top finishers together with Isi, tri organizer Vic Isi and Triathlon Association of Davao (Tinad) president Marlene del Rosario. Marlene Navarro, assistant P&B manager of Waterfront Insular Hotel and Gregging Hellomalo.

Race 1—(2YO)—
Happy Man (7), Prince Paolo (7), Jenelyn Tabuzo (7), Dolores (4), Softmade (3), Dona Nena (3), Pinoy Island (4)

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 2—(2YO)—Not Your Fool Crown (2), Regal Bloom (1), Penny Wise (1), Fujoka (5)

Race 3—(2YO)—Jap (1), Space Guard (4), Jade Empire (2), Kang Kung (1)

Race 4—(2YO)—Go The Norway (7), Genuine Spirit (1), Diesel Appeal (1), Isle Of Fire (1)

Race 5—(2YO)—Fabulous Ocean Lover (4), Lion's Pride (5), Tigerlily Illustrated (2), Race 6—Carioca Sara (1

Big Baby Davis ready to follow the Big Fella

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA—Glen Davis, the bulky big man better known as "Big Baby" to college basketball fanatics, announced here Tuesday he will ditch his final season to join the Shreveport Steamboat football Associates.

Fifteen years after Shaquille O'Neal announced he was skipping his senior season at Louisiana State University, Davis followed in the footsteps of the Orlando Magic superstar who was four NBA titles.

Davis has career totals of 1,087 points, 915 rebounds and 130 blocks, joining "Shaq" as the only Louisiana State players with such lofty numbers in all three categories.

"This is a move I want to do and am ready to do," Davis said. "This is a dream I've had and one that I have given a great deal of thought. I feel I grew a lot this season and I believe it's my future as a tight end."

Davis, a wide-bodied center with quick moves, averages 17.7 points and 18.4 rebounds in 29 games this season.

But the Tigers were a disappointing 17-12 this season, failing to make the NCAA college tournament. In 2000, when Davis was the Southeastern Conference Player of the Year with 18.6 points and 9.7 rebounds a game.

"I was fortunate to be on one of LSU's true Final Four teams," Davis said. "One of my reasons for not leaving last year was my hope I could go once further this year. Unfortunately, that didn't happen." AFP

DAVIS: I'm ready

Bobcats snap Cavs run

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA—GERALD Wallace had 27 points and 13 rebounds, Adam Morrison led the go-ahead three-pointer in overtime and the Charlotte Bobcats burst Cleveland 108-100 on Tuesday night to snap the Cavaliers' eight-game winning streak.

Morrison's 3 with 2:15 left snapped a tie and Raymond Felton's driving layup with 48 seconds left made it 103-98. Jamie-said Walker threw-in, who scored a career-high 35 points, hit a 3-pointer and two free throws in the final 30 seconds to put it away for Charlotte, which snapped a two-game losing streak.

Anthony Jones scored 30 of his 37 points after halftime, but he missed a runner in the lane with 30 seconds left in regulation and a 3-pointer at the buzzer to force overtime. Jones was 11-of-21 from the field.

Matt Carroll scored 30 points, including two free throws late to force overtime, as Charlotte won despite being without four injured regulars.

In other NBA games, it was: Detroit 94, New Jersey 90; Dallas 92, New York 77; Denver 96, Philadelphia 75; Boston 109, Atlanta 104; Memphis 101, LA Clippers 100; Chicago 89, Utah 104; Golden State 109, Houston 86; Indiana 91, Phoenix 100; Minnesota 90, Portland 101; Washington 90.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Carmelo Anthony scored 11 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter, including the go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:30 left in regulation, and Kenyon Martin added 29 points and a clinching free throw in the final seconds as helping the Nuggets win for the first time in New Jersey since 2000. It also marked the first time this season that Denver has won a game 11-21 when scoring less than 90 points.

Vince Carter had 28 points and nine assists for the Nets, but he was called for walking with 45 seconds to play, and missed a potential tying 3-pointer with 12 seconds to go. Richard Jefferson had 18 points for the Nets, who had won nine of 10 against Boston.

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Tayshaun Prince scored 30 points as Philadelphia, playing two days after the worst home loss in franchise history, was routed on the road. The Pistons ended a three-game losing streak at home.

The game was the first between the teams since Chris Webber injured with the Pistons after being waived by Philadelphia in January. Webber finished with nine points and seven rebounds in 27 minutes as Detroit improved to 22-7 since his second time the starting lineup.

Richard Hamilton added 16 points for the Pistons, including a perfect 8-for-8 from the stripe.

Willie Green led Philly with 30 points, while Andre Miller added 15.

In New York, Dirk Nowitzki and Josh Howard each scored 24 points, and the Mavericks hit the 55-win mark for the third straight season. Jason Terry added 15 points for the Mavericks, who pulled away from the short-handed Knicks early in the second half and improved the NBA's best record to 55-11. They have never done it in terms of losing consecutive games for first time since starting 0-4.

Erick Dampier had 10 points and 13 rebounds, and Howard grabbed 10 boards as the deeper Mavs were down the Knicks and shot 52 percent from the field.

Eddy Curry had 22 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks, who are playing without the injured Jamal Crawford, David Lee and Quentin Richardson, and have lost three of four.

In addition, Stephon Marbury left with about 10-1 minutes remaining with what looked like an injury to his left arm. Channing Frye missed most of the second half after getting poked in the right eye, and Curry played through a back problem that forced him to miss the morning shootaround.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Lloyd Wan scored 26 points and Chris Dud added 23 points and nine assists for New Orleans. Peja contributed on 10-of-15 shots from the floor, hauling in thirteen rebounds. AP

WEBBER: Return to Philadelphia

Small town girl weaves big tennis dreams

By Cordell Tapes, Inquirer Staff Writer

RACELAND CITY... THERE ISN'T MUCH TO A CHOICE spot...

Tom Jessica Sanchez Cuba literally had a bloody debut.

In her second career year-ago when Cuba, a six-year-old playing in a 10-Under tennis tournament, was on target to change such that she failed to see the three-foot-six-inch high wire bridging the net and the poles. She fastened her nose from the wire, prompting blood to soon freely from her nostrils.

Any other tennis player, especially a six-year-old girl already faced with tough odds against a boy two years older than her, would have opted for retirement from the match.

Except that when it comes to her passion for tennis, Jessica Martinez is far from ordinary. And not just because she was named after three generals of the sport—Australian Julian Cash, Frenchman Yannick Noah and Swiss Miss Martina Hingis.

Cuba, with her all-weltheiness and passion for the sport, struggled all the injury but lost nose-to-nose encounter with a boy two years older than her.

"I just wanted to keep on playing," Cuba, who was born 14 years ago in the sugar-producing city of La Gardenia in Negros Occidental, told the Inquirer. "I didn't want to wins in my first actual match."

Cuba first held a tennis racket at the age of two, copied style and footsteps, a former varsity standout from Cebu.

Months later, she was walking the hall to a decrepit prison court in the General Isaacnews de La Cadena, a stone's throw away from their home.

"I wanted her to be the racket early," said Sonnaters, whose two sons, Yannick and Johan, have also made their mark in the age-group scene.

The early training paid off slowly but surely, a process that continues up until now.

Two years after her bloody experience, Martinez emerged as Negros' top girls' 12-Under player, underscoring that tag by working her way to a bronze medal finish in the 2002 Palarong Pambansa in Iligan City.

Martina earned seven for free-but and Cuba was took her to the next level, fielding her to major age-group events in Manila.

Then after moving to Bacolod City some in 2000 and 2001, she had 11 outfits for local tournaments for even years because her mother, Elinda, who accompanies her in all out-of-town events, had to undergo surgery to correct her spinal column.

"I was looking forward to more tournaments but I knew my mother's condition was far important than tennis," Martina said.

While she returned to the summer circuit, accumulated Martina—armed with more solid groundstrokes—made headlines, winning the national 14-Under crown in 2000 as a 12-year-old. She also won the Palarong Pambansa crown that year at the expense of Regine Saratoga.

In her first international campaign in Malaysia, Cuba reached the heiregot ago Group Tournaments in December but the showed her down in Perlis and laughed events, where she surrendered the singles crowns to conquered Sally Mae Ilao. She teamed up with Ilao for three doubles titles.

Martina, though, wasn't satisfied.

"I wanted to match Ilao, and I did, only ring to her older brother's count of six events in the same year.

But Jessica believes Martina can go further. "She has stronger groundstrokes for her age. We just need to work on her speed, footwork and serve."

Martina's encounter with qualifying tournaments in Manila have made to climb a berth in the 14-Under and 16-Under events of the World Juniors Championship but Oceana in India from April 21-28 and the Junior Federation Cup from May 8-13 in Malaysia.

"We hope that these tournaments open up more opportunities for her majority in the Indian tournaments where the top non-Southern will be given a chance to play in European tournaments," Sonnaters said.

Martina also knows the tournament could be the start of something bigger for her, something that could bring closer to achieving dreams of playing against the former Hall of Famer Steffi Graf.

"I hope to play in Wimbledon, perhaps against Martina Hingis," Martina added.

AFTER getting off to a "bloody" debut, Jessica Martina Cuba hopes to destroy all obstacles standing between her and her ultimate tennis goal.

Sharapova finds path blocked by Williamses

KEY BISCAYNE, FLORIDA—TOP-SEEDED Maria Sharapova might have to go through the Williams sisters, both three-time champions, just to reach the quarterfinals of the Sony Ericsson Open starting on Wednesday.

Sharapova, the runner-up for the last two years to Venus Williams, won 2004 and Jennifer Capriati in 2005, has a bye into the second round, where she'll face either Chan Yung-jan of Taiwan or Maria Elagovina Nina of Spain.

In the third round the Russian could meet Venus Williams, the champion in 1998, 1999 and 2001 but vanquished this year Williams, who opens against Kateryna Bondi of Ukraine, has played only one tournament this year, winning last month in Memphis for her 34th career title.

Sharapova and Williams last met in the 2005 Wimbledon final, which Venus won for her fifth major title.

The winner of a possible Sharapova-Williams clash could meet 17th-seeded Serena Williams in the fourth round.

Sharapova lost to Serena in the Australian Open final, Serena's eighth Grand Slam crown and last appearance on the court.

Serena leads Venus 8-7 in matchups. They haven't met since the 2005 U.S. Open fourth round. However, Venus leads, 3-0 at Key Biscayne, including the 1999 final. Serena, who won three straight finals here from 2002-2004, meets Elena Likhovtseva of Russia or a qualifier in her opener.

Eighteen of the top 20 women are entered, with only No. 3 Amelie Mauresmo and No. 10 Elena Dementieva missing.

"This year it is so extremely tough draw, especially with the Williams sisters here," Kuznetsova said.

The men's field includes 19 of the top 20, minus only No. 13 Mario Ancic.

Two-time defending champion Roger Federer, his 41-match winning streak ended in his opening match at last week's Pacific Life Open, had a bye into the second round, where he awaits Igor Andreev of Russia or wild-card Sam Querrey.

Federer was seeded to meet either Tommy Haas or Tommy Robredo in the quarterfinals, with a possible showdown against Ivan Ljubicic in the semifinals for a repeat of last year's final. AP

Woods, Federer play in Miami–but not against each other

MIAMI—TIGER WOODS AND ROGER Federer go about their business in different manner.

Federer carries his own bag but has someone pick up his balls. Woods has someone carry his bag but picks up his own balls.

Unlike Federer, Woods rarely wears up with an ace, has no backhand and tries to hit as hard as he can.

Federer's drives only drops him off at tournaments; Woods' driver helps him win tournaments. And Federer often hits more shots in a single round than Woods could in a week.

Such disparities make comparing the two champions difficult. But both appear likely this week, which both will play in Miami.

Tiger and Roger are the best at what they do. But who's better?

"I'd rebag him," Woods says.

In reality?

"Oh, in reality! So."

Woods will stick to golf this week in the 24-Championship, which begins Thursday at Doral. Fifteen miles (25 km) to the southeast on Key Biscayne, Federer plans his opening match Saturday night in the Sony Ericsson Open. Each player seeks to win in Miami for the third year in a row.

Both events will draw big crowds. Woods hopes to be among the spectators watching Federer.

"I would love to try and catch one of his matches, if not two," Woods says.

Federer may skip Doral. He was in the players' locker room playing tennis matches in Shanghai in November and Dubai last month, and found nothing with golf's most popular player a challenge.

"I went to watch Tiger, and it's not the easiest thing," Federer says. "Luckily I walked inside the ropes, but to go see him playing golf is tough. You have to walk a lot. It's only now the backs of other people. I guess tennis is more fun (friendly in that respect).

"I don't know if I'm going to go see him here, but I hope he's going to come to the tennis on the weekend."

The two became friends the past year. Woods and his wife, Elin, sat in the front row at the US Open as Federer's guests when he won the final last September.

"We could relate very much to one another," Federer says. "We have a lot of experiences from everybody to see how alike of (common ground)."

They stayed in touch over the holidays, and again while Federer played in the Australian Open. Woods called Federer after he won the tournament for his 10th Grand Slam title, he received a roaring text message from Woods: "12 to 10."

Woods, 31, has won 12 Grand Slam titles, six shy of Jack Nicklaus' record, before age 28, Federer has more major titles as much free-hanging record of 14.

WOODS

FEDERER

Laurente risks Paba title vs Indon at ESC

PAN-ASIAN BOXING ASSOCIATION (PABA) lightweight champion Dennis Laurente will defend his title tomorrow against interim champion Heru Ruffi of Indonesia in a 12-round bustle at the Elorde Sports Center in Batangas City.

The match-up is one of the two championship showdowns being arranged on the full-slimming activity of the Elorde Boxing Week organized by the family of the late Gabriel 'Flash' Elorde, which will be highlighted by the annual Elorde Sports Awards.

Laurente had won the PABA title with a split decision victory over Thailand's Somchai Nakhinlee last Oct. 31 right at the latter's hometown. Prior to that bout, Laurente had prevailed via unanimous decision over Ricardo Singjaro at the Manny Pacquiao-Oscar Larios event at the Araneta Coliseum.

The other championship showdown pits Philippine featherweight titlist Mirafe Buñao of the Johnny Elorde Stable against Victor Max-cen in another 12-round offering.

An exciting undercard will feature Jean Marvin Bad Elorde, grandson of the late Flash Elorde, in a special attraction for his second professional bout against Leo Albao.

The young Elorde had an impressive pro debut on July 14 right in his grandfather's hometown in Cebu, easily outpointing Joseph Mineo over four rounds at the 'Monster of Truth' card.

The rest of the card pits Roberto Laurente versus Jeobar Dumaraog (0 title); Bernie Flores against Arnaldo Binalgen (0 title); Jay Ramos versus Jose Quilitar (5 title); Jayson Nonoy versus Climex Mendoza (0 title); and Arvin Escanilla against Jerard Abonsier (9 title).

Salvio Lagumbay

FEU tandem sweeps beach volley rivals

By Jane Manuera

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS from St. Bernlde now gone, Wendy Alane Semana and Lovelie Astorga teamed up for a solid win to reach the Lacson eliminations of the 2007 Smirnoff Beach Volleyball.

The duo from Far Eastern University swept past their counterparts from Lyceum and University of Rizal system today at the La Salle Greenhills sand court.

Enduring the intense heat, Semana and Astorga toppled Lyceum's Sheriffyn Carrillo and Jane Kathleen Anne of Lyceum, 21-17, 21-10, before posting a 21-18, 21-13 triumph over Regards Madonna Hernando and Lydia Joy Hara.

"We encountered little problems as far as adjustment is concerned," said the 19-year-old Astorga of his partnership with Semana.

Both are teammates in the FEU squad that finished second to UST in the just concluded UAAP women's volleyball championships.

"What were really concerned of is Adamson, which defeated us in a tune-up contest prior to this one," Astorga, a BS Accountancy management senior, said in Tagalog.

The Adamson pair of Hannah Suarez and Hans Jane Legaspi also emerged conquerors in the pre-tournament three-all tie last year's titlist Faith De Guzman and Jocelyn Gonzales from the College of St. Benilde (and) up their eligibility.

In the men's division, defending champion Adamson fanned of things to come as Mike Abesamis and Sherwin Meneses whipped Yormie Rodriguez and Jhonalbe Bastol, 21-13, 21-11.

Seven-foot tower in presence felt as Nico Cardeo and Rukland Hijos overhauled UPs Otis Andrew Parra and Mark Anthony Carpio, 21-11, 21-9.

In contrast, San Sebastian's Carlo Cleve and Rolly Mercado labored for three sets before securing one, 21-16, 21-16 and 15-9 decision over University of Luzon's Arvee De Guzman and Benjerol Gil.

Sarah Gonzaga and Aerlyn Dalusa of St. Francis of Assisi College clobbered St. Louis University's Sarah Marie Maestral and Stephanie Dayot, 21-7, 21-12, in the opener of the women's division.

But the St. Francis duo faltered against Lyceum's Bangkuleh Pasadeo and Ivy Gayelle Cassi, 16-21, 21-16, 9-15, leaving the volleyballers from FEU as the only unbeaten tandem in the 10-team squabbling saga.

Helping on rookies LC Girly Quemada and Nhea Rina Mesa, defending champion College of St. Benilde succumbed to Cathlen Villalon and Arlene Bermudez of Philippine Christian University, 21-12, 21-13.

The top three teams from the men's and women's divisions after tomorrow's finale will represent Luzon in the nationals championships scheduled on April 19-22 in Boracay.

Whether it's the mean exterior or its leather seats that you're looking at, there's so much to admire with the new Ford Escape. This genuine off-roader has a Control Trac II 4x4 system that lets it go where other so-called SUVs can't. And it's even more impressive in action. Put its 2.3L VVT engine with Drive-by-wire technology to the test and be overwhelmed by its lightning-quick responsiveness, smooth power delivery and superior fuel efficiency.

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BUSINESS
Editor Raul D. Pangalangan ● Assistant Editor Cecile S. Marfelina

Pagcor's Las Vegas dream to cost $20B

State firm in talks with Greek, US gaming operators

By Dexter L. Lucas and Nico Dizhoyan

THE PHILIPPINE AMUSEMENT AND GAMING Corp. (Pagcor) has raised its project cost estimate for its ambitious gaming complex—to be patterned after Las Vegas—that will rise on a reclaimed portion of Manila Bay (Cbd).

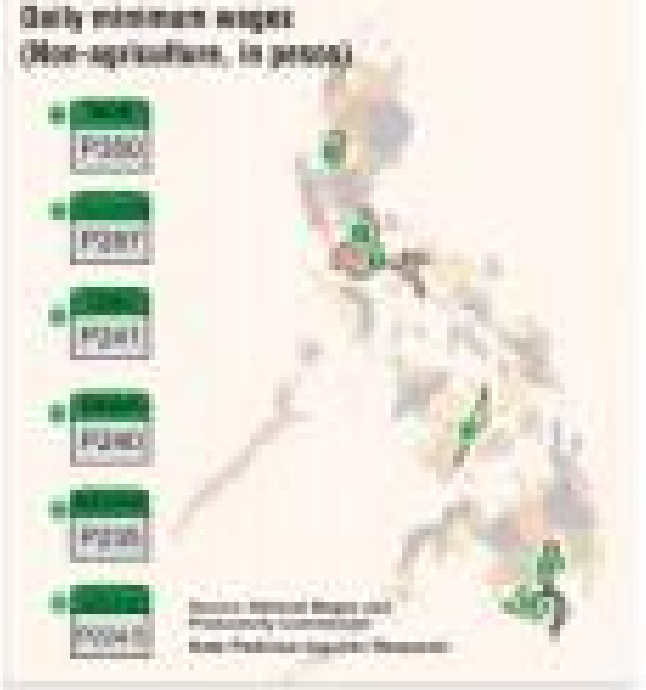
Speaking in separate press briefings, Pagcor chair and CEO Ephraim Genuino said that an investment of $20 billion—equivalent to 10 percent of the country's annual economic output in 2006—would be spent in putting up the "Entertainment City."

This marks a 10-percent hike over the initial $18-billion cost that was announced when the project was unveiled in 2005. Under the original plan, the investments and project cost would be spread out over a 10-year period.

"The project is a shift [for Pagcor] from gaming into entertainment," Genuino told reporters at the Asian Gaming and Entertainment Plaza Luncheon. Expo Manila. "We will have a Las Vegas in the Philippines."

The complex, also called Pagcor City, will be built in three phases on 400 hectares of reclaimed land. The first phase will have a hotel-casino and dinner park. The next two phases will have entertainment villages and more commercial centers.

Shares close 1.68% higher on bargain hunting



And the whiner is...

BREAKTIME

Conrrado S. Bawal III

[illegible] Cruzcilla from Victoria Court.

They thus missed their flight to Mindanao yesterday. The workers in the mine, not to mention their families, would probably run out and may go hungry soon.

Still, our contacts at Standard Chartered Bank assured us that early was not the British way of banking.

* * *

ONE of those many canned rites in business took place the other night. It was none other than the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year, Philippines 2007, the alias of which is "to identify, acknowledge, and encourage those entrepreneurial business people who, through their energy and passion, help bolster our economy, underpin our future and create wealth and employment for so many people."

Whats did profit stop being the motivation for business?

Anyway, and the winners is, well, none other than former Agricultural Secretary Salvi Bajon, now chair and president of La Frutera, a banana plantation and exporting company in the ARMM.

Yes, that's the conflict-ridden Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, where La Frutera hired former Muslim rebels (a few hundreds). Muslims now comprise almost 99 percent of its workforce, including managerial positions.

I haven't left the Bazaar entertaining else? Sure, he probably deserves the award. But I think we mean deviant him a force.

The winners in the past were Tony Tan Caktiong (Jollibee), Jaime Cardenas Ramos (National Bookstore) and Lance Gokongwei (Cebu Air, owner of Cebu Pacific).

The three are all in the service industry, while Bajonit is into corporate farming.

So far, for the sake of Richard Gomez and Gene Montano, the award has yet to recognize anybody in manufacturing in its four years here.

Does it mean that our country has no good manufacturing entrepreneurs? Or is manufacturing already dead?

* * *

WHO did that, Sergio Ortega III, the campaign manager of the Genuine Opposition, have to call off the coalition's campaign earlier?

"To spare things," the GO said.

Word is we is going around that the politically astute man named Bond... Wait. Bond, is not in the trend to spend for the campaign.

My info is, the GO candidates are running campaigns funded on their own. Which end, you guess to humorist.

On the other side, the Team Unity of this state administration is talking of support from local government units, with Team members, Lo Ejercito, Leyte, Tarlac, Bohol, Cebu, Antique and Iloilo promising a 12-0 shutout (in favor of the administration).

Really? Let's see.

* * *

MARC Corp. (the Montenegro-based unit of the Ayalatara group) sold its interest in the mega-port gold mine in Tampakan (South Cotabato) to the Australian firm Indophil Resources.

Ayalas had a 5-percent interest in the mining firm, while Indophil had the remaining 95 percent.

Indophil would pay for the Ayala interest in cash, worth about P300 million, and undertake a share-swap arrangement. Ayalas was to get 37 million new shares in Indophil, making Ayalas the second largest shareholder in the publicly-listed Indophil.

In turn, Indophil was to partner with the Swiss firm Xstrata (Xstrata's largest copper mining firm in the world), which gets 66 percent interest in the Tampakan project.

The Tampakan is said to have one of the world's largest copper and gold deposits yet undeveloped.

* * *

ACTUALLY, according to this top executive of one of the country's largest manufacturing companies, who also has small stuff, the Pinoy Aquino love national airport has two meanings.

Only, the Nina is forced to use only once.

If seems that a tall building happened to have erected itself near the flight path of the other (now useless) runway.

Only in Our country's ...

I promise to have more on this in the near future. It's not that, at the moment, nobody in Nata would take my call.

Shares close 1.68% ...

From page B1

ket, "Jo Love said.

Top-traded Philippine Long Distance Telephone tanked, seemingly going in its New York-listed shares, tking 39% to P2,390.

Rival Globe Telecom advanced P5 to P1,200.

Property developer Megaworld Corp. rose 10 centavos to P3.

Power distributor Manila Electric Co.'s B-shares, exclusive to Filipino investors, gained one peso to P69 while its A shares, open to foreigners, rose P1.50 to P76.

Food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.'s B-shares were steady at P82.50, while its B-shares inched up 50 centavos to P72.50.

AFP

Pagcor's Las Vegas dream to cost $20B

From page B1

Acquisitively, however, Pagcor officials said that only "$4.5 billion to $5 billion" would be spent on the first phase of the project, which would create between 4[illegible] to 45 hectares of the total projected area for lease reclaimed, with the rest to be added as the project gets underway.

Gonzalez also expressed confidence that the Pagcor-City projects will not encounter opposition, even from the Catholic Church.

"But as to hardly opposition to gaming, we will follow Lisa Vegas," he said. "I think the Church will understand. We are the biggest income generator for the government, and I think the Church will be mature enough to understand."

The gaming firm said that it needs P[illegible] billion in revenue from casino operations in 2008, almost 33 percent higher than the P[illegible] billion profit it posted in 2006.

The head of the state gaming monopoly revealed that they are already in talks with Greek casino and resort operator Lucotidis—a major player in the European gaming industry—for the development of Entertainment City's first phase.

"We have also spoken with Genting's Palaver and Genting," he said, referring to the US- and Malaysia-based casino operators.

Gonzalez said 90 percent of the funds for the project will come from foreign investors. Other funders from Japan, Europe, the UK and South Korea have also signified interest in financing the project.

Japanese investors, he said, are interested in developing a recreational village within the area for the expanding Japanese retiree market.

He added that Pagcor is now working on the technical requirements of the project, with preparatory work scheduled to begin this year. Construction would be completed by 2009.

"The thrust now is not casino gaming but total entertainment," Gonzalez said. "In the global arena, only 20 percent of the core source of gaming destinations such as Las Vegas come from actual gambling."

He said the Philippines stands to gain substantial tourism revenues by taking an active role in the global gaming industry. He noted that even a conservative country such as Singapore has opened its door to casinos and is reportedly about the benefits to be derived from the industry.

"With Pagcor City, we will quadruple our tourists to 10 million in five years," he said. "We hope we can exceed up-arch Singapore and Macau."

Gonzalez also said foreign investment in the project will be 51 indicated since Pagcor's charter is amended to allow the maximum control company to enter into joint ventures with foreign investors.

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Monte Oro losing interest in Transco

A FILIPINO-CHINESE BUSINESS group reportedly has withdrawn its bid for the right to operate the Philippines' 4,000-megawatt-plus power grid after a fifth attempt to auction off the network.

Pedro Bernal, chair of Philex Corp., which set up Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp. with State Grid Corp. of China for the power grid auction...said the group was considering other investment options at the moment.

"There is a 45-percent possibility we will not bid, but we are still evaluating," Bernal said on the sidelines of a mining conference.

The government failed for the fourth time in February to sell a 25-year license to run the assets of National Transmission Corp., which was valued at P5.28 billion.

Only one bidder—a consortium of Philippine investment firm Global Holdings Inc. and Indian power grid operator Tata NPS—turned up for last month's auction.

A third investment group, Ventures Holdings Corp., composed of top Philippine business leaders, did not submit a bid. It said it would make an offer if some discretionary issues, which it did not specify, were resolved.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said fresh bidding for the power grid would be held only after Congress agrees to give the potential winners a franchise to operate the assets.

The winning bidder would need to spend $850 million to expand and upgrade the power grid over the next five years.

Manila has been trying to sell off the assets of Transco and National Power Corp. as part of a broader fiscal consolidation programme and to modernise the country's decrepit power sector.

Reuters

IMF calls for new tax measures

P63-B budget deficit ceiling for '07 raised concern

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) said the need for the Philippines to enhance new revenue raising measures—such as the fiscal incentives rationalization and further reforms in the excise tax structure for alcohol and cigarettes—to meet its goal of balancing the national budget by next year.

The latest country review of the IMF noted that while improvements in tax administration in the Philippines could partially help the government shore up its tax effort by about 2.5 percent of gross domestic product over the medium term, new tax measures were needed to wipe out the budget deficit.

It also raised concern over the stability of the government's budget in the ceiling of P63 billion for this year given the need for higher infrastructure spending after years of belt-tightening.

"The IMF staff proposed the enhancement of tax incentives, and the increase and indexing of excise taxes to inflation as potential revenue raisers," the report said.

In this regard, the IMF staff said an early announcement of tax measures for the 2008 budget would help "convey the authorities' commitment to continued fiscal consolidation."

But local authorities, for their part, believe that congressional support for new tax measures is contingent on fully collecting revenues from the recent value added tax reform, which raised the consumption tax rate to 12 percent from 10 percent and scrapped certain exemptions.

Excise taxes on "sin" products were also boosted a few years ago but the final version was widely considered by analysts and economists (including those from the IMF) as "watered down" as it did not properly index the tax rates to inflation as originally envisioned by the Department of Finance.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves wants to wait for the first semester collection results of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs before considering new tax measures.

The IMF said investing the government bond guy's party objectives of "further consolidating and giving higher priority to spending this year would require national government revenues to grow by 15 percent, higher than the projected 10 percent growth in nominal (not adjusted for inflation) gross domestic product, the IMF said.

It said that meeting this revenue goal would be challenging, particularly given the difficulty of passing new tax measures before the May 2007 elections. It raised concern that carrying expenditures to meet the deficit target, on the other hand, could undermine the goal of raising infrastructure and social spending.

The report said a "slightly less ambitious deficit target might be appropriate for 2007 providing that for the overall downward direction in the deficit could be maintained."

Finance officials, however, are worried that any relaxation in the deficit target might be misinterpreted as an attempt to increase spending ahead of the elections. Also, they said that setting ambitious revenue targets would help spur the Bureau of Internal Revenue to boost collection efficiency.

Progress in other areas is expected to be boosted by the recent approval of the World Bank tax administration loan ($71 million). This will provide a framework for financial and technical support from other donors.

The staff urged the BIR to accelerate the pace of work on cleaning the taxpayer registry, modernize tax returns and including industry-based audit manuals.

Gov't team holding roadshow in US, Europe

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC TEAM WILL embark on a "no sleep" international roadshow to key cities in the United States and Europe this April to herald recent fiscal progress and affirm commitment to sustain economic reforms.

Ernesto Pernia, the government's economic development secretary, said the series of meetings with foreign investors would be held on April 16 to 20, or right after the International Monetary Fund-World Bank spring meetings in Washington DC.

In the US, the roadshow will be held in nine cities, New York and Boston, which will be arranged by American financial giants Citigroup and JPMorgan.

The European leg will be in London and Frankfurt, with Deutschebank and Credit Suisse First Boston as arrangers.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. will lead the economic team.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the government had no intention to float any new global bonds after the roadshow, hinting instead to tap $1 billion foreign commercial borrowing requirement early in the year.

"It's a no deal roadshow," Cruz said.

For the first time in many years, "only" foreign loans from official development partners will be bigger than commercial loan inflows, based on the borrowing program.

The economic managers will use the roadshow as a platform to affirm commitment to fiscal consolidation, after the government slashed its budget deficit from P138.5 billion in 2005 to an eight-year low of P62.2 billion in 2006.

Despite concerns of fiscal slippage during the run-up to the mid-term elections in May, the outgoing government was able to keep its budget deficit below target in the first two months of the year.

The government posted a cash budget surplus of P71.1 billion in February due to large spending cutbacks in personnel and controlled spending.

The January to February cumulative deficit was P21.4 billion lower than the P40.4 billion shortfall in the same period last year. It expenditure only 40 percent of the first quarter deficit ceiling of P46.6 billion.

The Department of Finance said the government was on track to meeting its full-year deficit target of P63 billion.

Phillip Wynn, an economist at UBS, said the government's target to cut a surplus in the second quarter would be boosted by two factors: the tax season (April) and the ban on infrastructure spending ahead of the election which should keep expenses low.

"All told, the first half (fiscal) targets are looking realistic and slippage should be minimal," Wynn said.

"For the second half, the risks include some catching up in spending and the impact on tax revenue of the expected slowdown in exports. Bmeo remain confident that any second half slippage will not be serious and, at worst, the budget deficit will be 1.2 percent (of gross domestic product) in 2007," Wynn said. Doris C. Dumlao

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE HAMILO COAST PROJECT TO BE LAUNCHED BY SM INVESTMENT CORPORATION ON MARCH 22, 2007

SM INVESTMENT CORPORATION IS SCHEDULED TO MAKE A PUBLIC LAUNCHING OF ITS **HAMILO COAST PROJECT** LOCATED AT **HACIENDA LOOC, NASUGBU, BATANGAS** ON MARCH 22, 2007

THE PUBLIC IS HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT OUT OF THE 5,800 HECTARES COVERING THE HAMILO COAST PROJECT **2,700 HECTARES ARE COVERED BY ADVERSE CLAIMS ANNOTATED BY CARMONA REALTY & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION.** THE PROPERTIES COVERED BY ADVERSE CLAIMS ARE **TCT NOS. 73003, 73007, 73652, 73653, 85605, 85606, 85607, 85610, 85611, 85612 AND 80981** ISSUED BY THE REGISTRY OF DEEDS OF BATANGAS.

THE PUBLIC AND PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS ARE, THEREFORE, ADVISED TO TAKE THE PROPER STEPS TO ASCERTAIN AND VERIFY THAT THE PROPERTIES IN THE HAMILO COAST PROJECT THAT THEY WILL BE PURCHASING FROM SM INVESTMENT CORPORATION OR ANY OF ITS AFFILIATES, PARTNERS AND AGENTS ARE NOT PART OF THE 2,700 HECTARES WHICH ARE COVERED BY SAID ADVERSE CLAIMS.

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Nido Petroleum sets oil, gas exploration plan

Citigroup retail unit puts up branch in Davao City

By Dorie C. Dantao

DAVAO CITY – THE RETAIL BANKing unit of the world's largest financial conglomerate, Citigroup, yesterday fleshed up its foothold in Mindanao by opening here its second branch in northern Philippines.

Citibank Savings, a banking unit of P2 billion to finish the expansion, infrastructure-building and re-branding of all 26 branches that Citibank NA acquired in 2005 from local insurance group Interbay Financial Corp., is betting big on the growth potential in Davao City in the 20th of the province's five regional centers.

Bank president Jeffrey Chua said: "Our customers are growing, our portfolio is growing, our products are expanding and we're happy to receive a warm welcome every time we inaugurate a new branch."

Pitching his point, he said the bank would re-launch and inaugurate the last of the 10 branches into Citibank Savings.

Chua told reporters at the branch inauguration yesterday that since taking over Interbay Savings Bank in March 2005 and converting the branches into Citibank Savings, deposits generated by the thrift bank had surged to P7 billion from only P3 billion.

Normal Acuna, Citibank Savings vice president, said the bank had positioned itself to capture fresh opportunities in fast-growing Davao City, the financial center of southern Mindanao and a gateway to the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean subregional economic growth area.

"We want to ensure the ease of finance in Davao City. We also want to offer our products and services to the entrepreneurs—the pineapple, banana and tuna exporters. There's also an emerging mining industry here," Acuna said.

CITIBANK Savings officials (from left) Normal Acuna, director for retail banking; Jeffrey Chua, president, and director Madeline Tiwanglung led the inauguration of the bank's branch in Davao yesterday

Northwest Palawan basin now attracting big companies, says exec

By Abigail L. Ho

MANTRADE-BASED NIDO PETROLEUM LTD., through local arm Nido Petroleum Philippines Pty. Ltd., has committed to aggressively explore for oil and gas resources in the Northwest Palawan Basin and, eventually, conduct drilling and production activities in the area.

In its 2006 financial statement, the company said its strategic focus for the year sustained three elements, one of which was the aggressive exploration on the petroleum blocks covered by its Service Contracts 54 and 58.

Nido said it would "aggressively pursue exploration activity in the Northwest Palawan Basin, including: acquiring 3D seismic in SC 58, and processing and interpreting seismic acquired in 2006 to develop leads and prospects (seismic for subsequent drilling campaigns."

In an interview late last year, Nido deputy managing director Joanne Williams said the company would invest $3.2 million in SC 58 and $2 million in SC 54 this year.

For SC 58, which covered 1.2 million hectares, she said the $3.2 million would be used for the conduct of a 3D seismic survey over the area.

Additional seismic surveys would be conducted in SC 54, which covered 540,000 hectares, she said.

In 2006, Nido spent $2.1 million for the two service contracts: $1.4 million for a 2D seismic survey in SC 58 and $7.6 million for a 2D seismic survey in SC54.

Nido managing director David Whitby said in an earlier interview that the third-largest Palawan basin was now "becoming a place where big companies want to be in."

"The basin has been fairly under-explored, but the prospects are very large. It's good that Nido was there first," he said.

Another strategic focus of the company this year would be the Galoc oil field, which is hoped would produce first oil by early 2008.

Galoc Production Co. (GPC), which operates SC 14C, is scheduled to drill two production wells between August and October. This will entail an investment of $86.4 million.

GPC owns 56.25 percent of SC 14. Nido is the second largest shareholder with a 22.26-percent stake.

Williams told Nido had earmarked $20 million this year for the development of the Galoc oil field.

BIMP-Eaga: 13 glorious years

(World Footprint)

REGIONAL COOPERATION can play a central role in the progress of individual countries and entire regions, even when different political systems are involved.

Whether the issues at hand are economic, social, or environmental, regional cooperation can accelerate development by fostering economic synergies. It reduces risk and uncertainty and increases each country's capacity to deal with negative developments when they occur. It strengthens community relations and regional stability.

In both good times and bad, regional cooperation can be a powerful instrument for reducing poverty, promoting peace, and facilitating sustainable development.

Every Mindanaoan can remember that at the height of the economic boom in Southeast Asia in 1994, the Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-Eaga) was launched. The Eaga region, with the exception of Brunei Darussalam, shares common characteristics. Considerable geographic distance from their respective capital states, significant development gaps between the sub-national and national economies, and resource-based subregional economies that are less developed than the capital regions. The BIMP-Eaga initiative, then, was the key strategy of the four participating governments in addressing this socio-imbalance.

BIMP-Eaga aims to spur and sustain growth in identified less-developed and geographically proximate areas. Its goals are clear. To increase trade, investments, and tourism in the subregion through freer movement of people, goods and services; to develop vital infrastructure in the subregion, and coordinate the development of economic and common resources to ensure sustainable development.

BIMP-Eaga has a wide range of economic strategies, which—if efficiently harnessed—could transform it into a major investment destination in the Asean for agro-industry, natural resource-based manufacturing, and tourism.

Its strategic operational focus is to accelerate private sector-led economic development, improve export competitiveness, and to enhance the attractiveness of the Eaga as local and foreign investments based on complementary economic factors, shared natural resources, information and technology, and the specialization and rationalization of production.

In a joint statement during the Third BIMP-Eaga Summit last Jan. 12 in Cebu City, the subregional groupings took special note that BIMP-Eaga has moved forward with very concrete results after decades of development and enhancing four-country cooperation. In small broad-to-consistent way further deepen the cooperation within the overall objective of narrowing development gaps in the Asean and for the realization of the Asean community.

MINDANAOWORLD

Agit Kayayo-Baco

The progress achieved in the implementation of the BIMP-Eaga Roadmap in (brief) ejercise 2006-2010, was encouraging. Several flagship projects have been realized in its implementation, including the completion of the 5060 Eaga database on cross-border trade, investment and tourism; the implementation of the BIMP-Eaga Roadmap; preparations of the energy action plan; conduct of joint trade and tourism promotion activities; finalization of the guideline on plies-crossing Asean investments/program in BIMP-Eaga, and forging of stronger partnership with the Eaga's Development Partners and international development agencies.

Recognizing the importance of transport connectivity toward accelerating the economic development in the subregion, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on expansion of air linkages including the granting of fifth freedom traffic rights for passenger and cargo services in the airports of Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei Darussalam, Balikpapan and Pontianak, Indonesia; Kota Kinabalu and Sorting, Malaysia; and Davao City and Zamboanga City in the Philippines. It was further recommended to adopt a subregional multimodal or bilateral interstate transport and transit transport agreements in order to further facilitate cross-border movement of people and goods.

The phenomenal success would open up the BIMP-Eaga to other markets not only travel but also on trade. There were increase of opening up of new routes particularly in the Northern Territory with possible new routes to Darwin. Other areas would involve the four countries in the Eaga in activities in the sustainable fuel and halal industries. Indonesia will be putting up a Philippine Trade Center in Manado this year with the physical structures and other related aspects already in place. Philippine products, especially those from Mindanao, will be opened to other markets once they are displayed at the center.

The tourism sector, as one of the primary users of transport services, is also playing a big role in ensuring the sustainability of existing transport linkages. A strong marketing program aggressively promoting BIMP-Eaga as a single tourism destination are being planned.

Cagit Kayayo-Baco, an advocate for Mindanao, is chair of Mindanawatch Foundation Inc., representative to the Export Development Council and president of Filipino Call Centers Alliance. E-mail comments to talkmin@yahoo.com

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Alcantara group raises equity in Tampakan gold project

By Dixie L. Lucas

ALSONS CORP., THE PRIVATE HOLDING company of the Alcantara Group, has entered into a share swap agreement with its Australian partner Indophil Resources NL, effectively increasing its stake in the Tampakan copper-gold project in South Cotabato.

Under the scheme, Alsons will exchange its existing 8 percent stake in the Tampakan project—which is developing with Indophil—for 426.5 million and 37 million new shares in the Australian firm.

The transaction will be executed over three tranches as certain key project milestones occur.

As each milestone is achieved, Indophil would receive approximately one third of Alsons' existing Tampakan project interest.

Upon completion of the deal, Alsons will end up as the second largest shareholder in Indophil, the company said in a statement.

"This strategic partnership with Indophil reinforces our long-term commitment as a partner on the Tampakan project and other prospective mining projects to be undertaken by Indophil in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region," Alsons chair Justus I. Alcantara said, terming the deal as a strengthening of his family's ties in the local mining industry.

"We are confident that the project, which now has the backing of global copper giant, Xstrata, will live up to its potential as a world class mine that will reap significant returns for the project stakeholders," he added.

Xstrata Copper, a major global mining company, recently exercised its option to acquire 62.5 percent of the Tampakan project, one of the largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits in the world.

In a separate disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange, Indophil said it had "moved to increase its direct interest" in the Tampakan project "by agreeing to purchase Mitsubishi partner Alsons Corp.'s 8 percent interest."

Indophil said the deal would "progressively lift its stake in the Tampakan project from 33.3 percent to 57.5 percent."

Xstrata Copper, the copper division of the major global mining group Xstrata Plc, will hold the remaining 62.5 percent as part of a separate agreement announced in late 2006.

Share swap with Australian partner

Under the deal, Xstrata Copper would assume project management responsibilities for the Tampakan project on March 30, 2007.

The Tampakan copper-gold project holds an estimated two billion tons in deposits, with potential for further growth.

Based on current studies, Tampakan is a lifelong operation containing 15.6 million tons of copper and 14.6 million ounces of gold at a 0.3 percent copper cut-off grade.

It is poised to produce 350,000 tons of copper per year (150,000 tonnes of gold a year during its first 10 years of production.

The Tampakan project is held by Philippine firm Sagittarius Mines Inc., under the Columbia Financial or Technical Assistance Agreement that is a contract with the Philippine government.

In its statement, Indophil's managing director, Tony Robbins said the company is pleased to have secured an increased level of interest in, and increased exposure to, the Tampakan project.

"This is an excellent outcome for Indophil and its long-term partner Alsons," he said. "With Alsons emerging as a significant shareholder in Indophil, it is in both our interests to work closely together to develop the Tampakan deposit, and pursue other exploration and development opportunities in the Philippines."

DMCI to invest ₱3B this year in housing deals

By Elizabeth Sanchez Lazaro

DMCI HOMES INC., THE HOUSING ARM OF construction giant DMCI Holdings Inc., yesterday said it would spend at least P3 billion this year on five upscale projects to serve the middle-income housing market.

Alfredo Austria, managing director at DMCI Homes, said Tuesday night during a project launch at the Manila Polo Club in Makati that roughly P1.5 billion would go to the initial phases of Trees Gardens in Binubusboong City, a high-rise condominium.

The rest would go to other projects, such as Cypress Towers, a joint venture with Crown Equities Inc. in Tagaytay City.

Cypress will have three residential towers and units will be turned over to buyers starting next year.

DMCI Homes is also introducing its line of mid-rise or five-story condominium buildings.

These include the Riverbend Residences in Pasig, a joint venture with the Equitable PCI Bank group and Stonewood Point in Tagaytay City.

DMCI Homes is also developing the Alta Mesa de Bonanza Banks and loft units are priced at between P3.9 million and P6.9 million each.

Aside from these projects, the property firm also plans to develop 200 hectares of property in Tagaytay to be dubbed Township Central into a mixed-use residential community that will house DMCI Homes projects like Cypress Towers and Stonewood Pointe.

The 66-hectare property will include mid-rise projects, high-rise condominiums and subdivisions.

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Kagawaran ng Pagawaan at Lansangan
Opisyal ng Pagbili at Patalaan

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
(PROCUREMENT OF AFP DEFENSE EQUIPMENT)

China's Shimao in $2-B hotel deal in RP

CHINA'S SHIMAO PROPERTY HOLDINGS Ltd. will invest as much as $2 billion in hotel chains in the Philippines under long-term leases with the government, said Tesda Secretary Peter Laviña.

Pavilion said Reuters that the chairman of the Shanghai-based property group informed President Macapagal-Arroyo on Monday night that his group would sign leases with the state firm Subic Conversion Development Authority to put up hotels in Port Barton on the outskirts of the Makati financial district and in Quezon City.

The group is also looking at other properties outside the capital, such as in the southwestern island of Palawan, Pavilion said. Reuters

Omico group woos Ivanhoe

PUBLICLY LISTED OMICO'S CORE OF FINALIZing the terms of a possible joint venture involving Omico's gold mine in Benguet with the group led by Canadian mining giant Ivanhoe Mines.

Omico president Tommy Kit Ming Tia declined to give further details, however, citing the sensitivity of the talks at this stage.

While talks are ongoing, he said Omico would pursue a three-for-one stock rights offer from which it hopes to raise P300 million.

The proceeds will be used to pursue future joint ventures and buy new mining assets.

To allow new investors to come in, Omico also approved a plan to increase its capital stock to P2 billion, a portion of which may be issued to interested investors.

Omico has a mining agreement with Masbate Gold and Mining Development Co. to operate the latter's 326 mining claims covering 807 hectares in Itogon, Benguet.

The agreement was first struck in Septem ber 1986 and was extended for another 20 years in January 1996. Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

DISCLOSURES

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. directors Albert F. del Rosario has bought 4,000 shares for P1,200 each and 14,000 shares for P1,218 each on March 19.

* * *

LAWYER Rolando L. Joshi has resigned as director of **Universal Rightful Property Holdings Inc. and Universal Leisure Corp.** effective March 20.

China Banking Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 3, 4 p.m. at the Penthouse, China Bank Building, 8749 Paseo de Roxas cor. Villar St. in Makati City. Stockholders of record as of March 21 are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting. Compiled by Kate Phelizon, Inquirer research

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

CURRENCIES

March 21, 2007 Dealers	Unit	Buy in Equivalent	Sell in Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.019234	1.000000	49.0400
Japan	Yen	0.004351	0.009127	0.2243
United Kingdom	Pound	0.009722	0.019234	0.4704
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.002466	0.128205	6.2857
Switzerland	Franc	0.015837	0.031847	49.1618
Canada	Dollar	0.016667	0.032787	49.1618
Singapore	Dollar	0.012658	0.025000	30.7750
Australia	Dollar	0.014925	0.029412	36.0000
Taiwan	Dollar	0.000614	0.019417	23.8095
Korea	Dollar	0.000021	0.000041	0.0500
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.005236	0.010309	12.6400
Brunei	Dollar	0.012658	0.025000	30.7750
Indonesia	Dollar	0.000002	0.000004	0.0050
Thailand	Baht	0.000576	0.001136	1.4000
UAE	Dirham	0.005440	0.010730	13.1500
Qatar	Riyal	0.005291	0.010417	12.7500
Kuwait	Dinar	0.065359	0.129032	158.0000
China	Yuan	0.002564	0.005051	6.1800
Euro	Euro	0.025316	0.050000	61.2500
Italy	Lira	0.000013	0.000026	0.0316
Greece	Drachma	0.000074	0.000147	0.1800
Spain	Peseta	0.000152	0.000300	0.3674
France	Franc	0.003846	0.007576	9.2727
Germany	Deutsche Mark	0.012821	0.025253	30.9091
Netherlands	Guilder	0.011364	0.022388	27.4167
Belgium	Franc	0.000313	0.000617	0.7556
Austria	Schilling	0.001832	0.003610	4.4200
Switzerland	Franc	0.015873	0.031250	38.2500
Sweden	Krona	0.002778	0.005464	6.6900
Norway	Krone	0.003106	0.006116	7.4850
Finland	Markka	0.003106	0.006116	7.4850
Denmark	Krone	0.003413	0.006720	8.2250
Portugal	Escudo	0.000124	0.000244	0.2990
Ireland	Punt	0.025316	0.050000	61.2500
Iceland	Krona	0.000284	0.000559	0.6850
Russia	Ruble	0.000741	0.001460	1.7875
Hungary	Forint	0.000096	0.000189	0.2315
Poland	Zloty	0.005155	0.010152	12.4250
Czech Rep.	Koruna	0.000877	0.001727	2.1150
Slovakia	Koruna	0.000596	0.001173	1.4360
New Zealand	Dollar	0.013158	0.025907	31.7000
Thailand	Baht	0.000576	0.001136	1.4000
SDR	Unit	0.029586	0.058275	71.3100

Source: Bankers Association of the Philippines

Death Notices

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
– 2 Corinthians 5:8

Lovingly Remembered, So Sadly Missed
on his First Death Anniversary

† Capt. Teofilo T. Calimag, Jr.

Ret. 747-400 Captain
October 16, 1959 – March 22, 2006

Masses for him will be offered in the following churches:

Abbey of Our Lady of Montserrat (San Beda College)	7:00 AM
Santissimo Rosario Parish Church, U.S.T. Espana, Mla.	7:00 AM
La Naval de Manila, Sto. Domingo Church Q.C.	8:00 AM
Redemptorists Baclaran Church	5:45 PM
Sacred Heart Parish, Kamuning Q.C.	7:00 AM
St. Jude Shrine, San Miguel, Mla.	8:00 AM
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, Quiapo, Manila	10:00 AM
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Church, Kaitle Cogeo/ah	6:00 PM
Parish of the Lord of Divine Mercy, Sikatuna Village, Q.C.	6:00 PM
St. Joseph Shrine, Antipolo Q.C.	12:00 PM
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine, New Manila, Q.C.	7:00 AM
Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church, Q.C.	6:00 AM

His loving wife, Marilou; Children Capt. Jerome L. Calimag, Wife Elaine, Atty. Peter L. Calimag, Teofilo L. Calimag III & Jean, Grandchildren Ms. Katrina, Anna Patricia, Sofia Andrea, Kevin Matthew, Mirabelle Angelie, brothers, sisters, cousins, nieces & nephews, relatives, other relatives, friends and all those whose lives he touched so may he rest the eternal repose of his soul.

Atty. Delfin L. Gonzalez Sr.
and his children
Federico, Jaime, Jorge, Delfin Jr., and Maria Regina

regret to announce the

our beloved Mama

Anna Carballo Gonzalez

the love that leads us,
the "firefly" that lights our path,

died in the loving embrace of Our Lord
at 7 o'clock in the morning of
Wednesday, 21 March 2007.

Mama's remains will lie in state
from Thursday to Saturday, March 22 to 24,
at La Fonteraie Pax, Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City.

Mama is also survived by her grandchildren Carina, Miguel, Enrique, Luis, Ana, Gabriel, Mitos, Martin, Mario, Antonio, Monica, Isabella, Luisa, Jose, Michael, Paolo and her great-grandson Enzo; her daughters in law Nenette, Ciriaca, Pete, and Noemie; nieces in law Ralph W. Rivera, and her sisters Pilar and Lourdes.

Instead of flowers, a small donation to the Dios Bosco program for street children in Mabuhay, Muntinlupa City will be appreciated.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
– 2 Corinthians 5:8

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LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.

JOSEPH EDELBERTO G. ZAMUDIO (artist)	La Funeraria Paz, Inc. Chapel	March 22, 2007	2:00 PM
DRA. RAZEL ORTIZ	Chapel 1 La Funeraria Paz, LLC	March 22, 2007 11:00 AM	Paz Cemetery

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CESAR HERMOSURA ANGELES

Peacefully joined his Creator
on March 20, 2007 at the age of 71.

Col. Rodolfo Velasco Purugganan, PAF (Ret.)

of Fort Stotsenburg, Pampanga

Died in the grace of our Lord
on March 19, 2007 at the age of 81

People, Events & Products

Review for realty broker's licensure exam

THE DEPARTMENT OF Trade and Industry has set another licensure examination for those aspiring to be licensed real estate brokers in May 27, 2007. With the prospect of another real estate boom-era in the pre-1997 period, it is expected that many would be eyeing to practice themselves as real estate professionals. In this regards, Urban Institute of Real Estate announced that schedules of its Comprehensive Real Estate Seminars (CRES) and review to Makati and Quezon City as follows:

Monday afternoon Seminar will be on March 26, April 16, 23, 30, May 7 and 21, from 1:15 to 6:45 p.m. at Max's Restaurant, Glorieta 2, Makati, while Tuesday morning Session will be on March 27, April 18, 17, 24, May 3, 8 and 22, from 8 to 12 p.m. at Max's Restaurant, Glorieta 2, Makati. The late-nite afternoon Session will be at the same time and venue and will be held on March 29, April 19, 21, 28, May 5 and 12, while the Thursday Afternoon Session will be held at Max's Restaurant at Gateway Mall, Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City on March 29, April 12, 19, 26, May 3 and 10, same time.

Experts and authorities in their respective fields led by land law specialist lawyer Benito Tobias, and engineer Santos Cruz, 1st and 8th placer in the real estate appraisers and brokers board examinations respectively, are Guest up-to-date on the subjects officially prescribed by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Urban also announced that updated copies of "Comprehensive Review and Reviewer For Real Estate Broker's Examination" prepared by engineer Benito S. Cruz and lawyer Ma. Benito T. Cruz III are now available for distribution to aspiring examinees who need for taking the real estate broker's board examination.

Designed to support prospective examinees, the more than 200 page review-er contains all the lessons on topics with more than 200 post board questions and answers sorted according to board subject required by DTI. This reviewer will also be a handy reference for real estate developers, practitioners and property owners.

For other details or advance registration, tuition/fee-dit may be reached at 681-0920 or 0919-6438-9194 may be e-mailed at urbanre@pacific.net.ph

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Stand up comedy workshop

STAND-UP COMEDIAN ALLAN MANALO, ONE OF the front-runners in the Philippine stand-up comedy from to the Philippines, will conduct an eight-week workshop on the classic (American) style of stand-up comedy at the Saint's Center, 451 Bernardo corner Saint's Mabini Streets, Mandaluyong City every Saturday, 9 to 4 p.m., from March 7 to April 28. The workshop will cover the basic elements of stand-up namely: watching comedy stage, microphone technique, how to find material, how to write a joke, writing up punch lines, warm-timing, stage persona, characterization and point-of-view, various stand-up styles, the "Right Way", crowd control (dealing on audience and handling hecklers). The comedy habit and other gigs a comedy centers like. The seminar will culminate in a special Stand Attack Night on Comedy show featuring Allan Manalo, Pat Ilang and the graduates of the course. The fee is P 6,000 for the entire course inclusive of the show. It will be limited to 20 participants on a popular right spot. For those who want to book Allan Manalo and Pat Ilang for stand-up comedy shows, can and campus bookings, corporate events, birthday, debut and other parties contact 585-9319 to 327-4258, text 0919-3080788 or e-mail info@stand-up.com.ph for additional information and show schedules.

Photo contest and exhibit on the Rotary 4 way test

LEARNING THE THEME "VISUAL EXPRESSIONISM IN the 4 Way Test," the Rotary District 3780 and the Makati Central Business Club have launched an photo contest and exhibit featuring the 4 Rotary 4 Way Test this month. This activity aims to make the general public aware and more conscious of the Rotary 4 Way Test through photo presentations/pictures that express about less than 10 photographs depicting the Rotary 4 Way Test. The 4 Way Test" has been compiled by Rotarians through billboards, signages, and the like. Today it stands as one of the most widely printed and quoted statements of business ethics in the world. Photographs can also have something in display from 1 May. Test be then opened to public to appreciate. Photos, part of the activity will submit the photo entries of the contest at the Club's showroom behind Mall, Alabang Tel two weeks after May 11. Proceeds from this contest will go to the Tulay Ginsak Alabang's Village in Alabang. Tulay is the Rotary Club of Alabang's flagship project. It admits poor and abandoned children, particularly street children ages 9-18, as residents. In Tulay, they are taught discipline and values in all their activities. The Rotary Club of Alabang's vision is to continually guide Tulay Foundation to its goal of transforming the lives of street children to useful and productive citizens.

Hyundai Philippines tagged as DEP capital of the world

IN THE RECENT DEALER CONVENTIONS HELD last February 8, at Dolfil Philippine Plaza, Hyundai Asia Resources Inc. (Hari), the exclusive distributor of Hyundai vehicles in the Philippines, was officially tagged by Hyundai Motor Company (HMC) as the DEP capital of the world within 12 of its dealerships were the first in quality in their Hyundai Elite certification among over 1,000 Hyundai distributors and dealers across the globe. The Hyundai Elite certification is also awarded by HMC to dealers worldwide that surpass passed the stringent standards set in the Dealer Enhancement Program or DEP in 2006. 10 Hyundai dealers were awarded with the Hyundai Elite certification. Hari targets all of its 30 dealers nationwide to be certified by the end of this year.

Dr. Corrales launches book: 'The Leadership Relationship'

DR. RAMON G. CORRALES, PH.D., FORMER HEAD (CEO) of Corporate Bankers, Inc., will be offering a series of lectures on his newly published book: The Leadership Relationship. The FREE Model for Building High-Impact Relationships. Published by Kalila Publishing for Inc. Kalila Publishing arm. The Leadership Relationship Book Launch is slated on March 23, Friday, 6 to 8 p.m. at Mandarin Oriental Manila, Makati Avenue, Makati City. He will be covering major issues in the Philippines to presented his model of leadership known as the REAL Model for building high-impact relationships. The Leadership Relationship will be available at all Goodwill Bookstores outlets in Glorietta, Legaspi, Ayala and Greenhills, and also at Bridges Bookstore, Building at Bridges of Goodwill at "The New's Kiosk" Greenhills Shopping Center, Metro Manila. For book inquiries and reservations, please call Kalila Publishing Inc. at tel. nos. 413-1688 and 413-0957. You may also call Goodwill Bookstore's advertising assistance: melissa office at 806-8664 locals 104 and 111.

Big Bang's Burst o' Prizes

BIGGING THE EXCITING and critically desirable fun for adventurous individuals who choose to live life to the fullest, is bursting with surprises. With just 1 case, one gets a free basket of assorted, unopened crunchy bits, milk chocolate and chewy nougaty goodness of Big Bang! Bring your barkada to Big Bang's Burst o' Fun extending from the Metropolitan Limousine Plaza, or Timezone in Mall of Asia on March 24 or Timezone in Gateway, Cubao or Timezone in Ramos Market on March 25, pop a balloon to win Big Bang mini bars you can eat or share. Schedule that barkada gimmick at these malls and catch Big Bang's Burst o' Prizes to get free Big Bang Nougat Bars.

2GO supports 'Large 8': An exhibit on Photo-abstraction

LARGE 8: AN EXHIBIT ON PHOTO-ABSTRACTION opens with works by acclaimed artist Ben Cab. Gino Bautista, Sidney Castillo, Emil Flaviano, Pancho Lacson, Jojo Mendoza, Wig Sylvestre and Jaime Zobel. The exhibit, a larger feat the experience with renowned artists over 8 feet by 10 feet in size. Each artist will have 2 works each making it a total of 16 photographic art pieces. Opening the start of the month, the handling of the art pieces is no joking matter. 2GO, an electric company, gave the artists peace of mind by having the delicate material with utmost care and efficiency. 2GO offers clients to ensure anything, including items that require specialized packing and crating needs. The extensive network of 2GO aims allows delivery and pick up anywhere in the Philippines making them the only main choice in transporting the Large 8 art pieces and it touched the country. The grand launch of the exhibit happened on March 8 at the SM Mall of Asia where it ran until March 15. The exhibit will then tour all other SM supermalls on the following dates: SM Megamall (March 21-31), SM Baguio (March 29-April 8), SM Clark (April 11-17), SM Davao (May 9-16), SM The Block (May 19-24), SM Bacolod (May 30-June 7) and SM Cebu (Aug. 8-16). For more information on 2GO's services, call (+63 2) 102-8141, log on to www.2gocorp.com or contact any other 2GO branches.

Bits & Clips

BUSINESS

Asia cautious before Fed; China hits record

SINGAPORE—SHARES IN ASIAN ship makers rose on Wednesday after strong earnings from US tech firms, and China's main index, which has since triggered a global sell-off, hit a record on gains in the resources and property sectors.

The dollar steadied after falling on a report China would stop stockpiling foreign exchange reserves, but traders were cautious ahead of a federal Reserve policy meeting statement.

Caution before the outcome of the Fed meeting also hit share markets, with indexes in Australia, Hong Kong and South Korea all losing ground, although markets elsewhere in the region posted modest gains.

The US central bank was widely expected to hold its key interest rate steady at 5.25 percent, but financial markets will focus on the accompanying statement for clues on the health of the world's biggest economy and the outlook for interest rates.

The Fed was expected to announce its decision early this morning.

"Investors will be really looking to see whether an interest rate hike will be in the second or third quarter," said Guy Hatchwell, chief investment officer at MFS Investment Management Ltd., in Australia. "Also, any comments on subprime mortgage risks will be a key focus."

Losses for lenders operating at the riskier end of the US home loan mortgage have raised fears of slowing economic growth and prompted a wave of selling in global markets last week.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia Pacific shares outside Japan was up 0.2 percent yesterday afternoon.

Australia's S&P ASX 200 fell 0.3 percent as a strong Australian dollar—which touched a 10-year high against the US currency—weighed on firms that derive a substantial proportion of their earnings from the United States.

China's main index—whose sharp drop late last month triggered a global flight from risk that sent equity markets tumbling—was up 0.5 percent, after earlier hitting an all-time high.

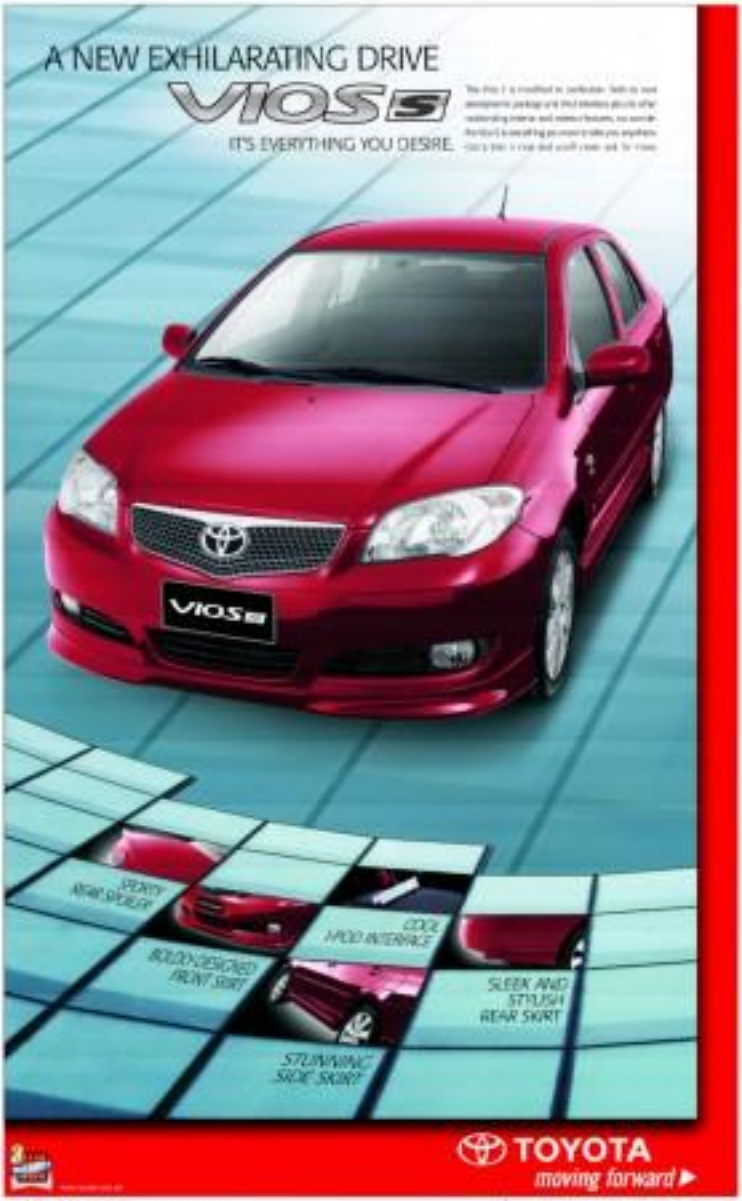
"Most investors are entering the market," said analyst Zhou Lin at Huatai Securities. "Most investors are still bullish because of prospects for strong corporate earnings growth."

Taiwan's benchmark index rose 0.3 percent and Singapore's Straits Times gained 0.5 percent, but Seoul's main index slipped 0.1 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng was down 0.2 percent.

Oil swooped some of Tuesday's losses, as dealers braced for US government data later in the day expected to show a fall in fuel stocks amid robust demand. NYMEX crude for May delivery rose 25 cents to $59.58 a barrel.

Oil slumped to a six-week low at the end of last week and fell on Monday as dealers feared US housing market slump and China's move to raise interest rates at the weekend could weigh on economic growth, dampening fuel demand.

Gold traded around $651.30 an ounce, below a two-week high of $656.60 hit in New York on Tuesday when a weaker dollar triggered fund and physical buying. Reuters



Signal Marine starts work on shipyard

By Agustin Tanio
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—SIGNAL MARINE Shipyard Inc. has started construction of the country's newest ship building facility estimated to cost P240 million.

Signal Marine is a consortium actively involved in the development of the local tuna industry.

It has extended its reach abroad where it bought the fish canning facility of PuenHoda International in Indonesia.

Signal Marine's owners include Martin Tan, Domingo Teng, Francis Lasarte, Bill Fleming, Freddie Lim, Stalley Tiangco, Settson Ong, Fred Tan and Ralph Fleming.

Tan, Signal Marine president, told the Inquirer that the construction of the facility would be undertaken by Nordic Engineering.

He said construction would be done in phases, each costing about P80 million.

Tan said the facility, which can build ships carrying 3,000 metric tons of fish, was expected to be completed in 10 months.

He said the construction was optimistic that the facility would further boost the city's $1.6-billion peso tuna industry.

"We have the second-biggest and most modern fish port complex in the country and with the completion of our shipyard, we will be attracting both local and foreign fishing vessels," Tan said.

Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr., who led the groundbreaking ceremony early this week, said he was happy that local businessmen have pooled their resources to pursue such a project.

"This project is labor-intensive so it will provide new jobs for the locals once the boat building and repair starts," Tan said.

Firms alarmed by Thailand's tuna proposal

By Dennis Jay Santos and Judy Quiroz
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—THE ONGOING bilateral trade talks between the United States and Thailand have alarmed the country's tuna industry players.

Domingo Teng, president of the General Santos City-based TRI Marine Industry and also one of the most respected figures in the country's tuna industry, said Thailand has been asking the United States for the duty free entry of its tuna exports.

Teng claimed that if the two countries agree to Thailand's request, the Philippine tuna industry would eventually die because it would make Philippine exports more expensive.

The US slaps a tariff of 12.5 percent on tuna products from the Philippines.

"We urge the government to lobby for the same concession as Thailand," he said.

The tuna industry in General Santos exports $200 million worth of tuna every year.

It produces an annual fish catch of 500 metric tons, or over 18 percent of the world's fish catch volume, he said.

There are about 800,000 workers in the tuna industry, mainly in General Santos City.

Teng said if Thailand becomes successful in its bid, these workers, who deposit P1.2 billion a year in local banks, would eventually go hungry.

Teng said the tuna industry was one of the important sectors in the country as revenues from the sector continue to rise over the years.

He said the country's tuna industry has been growing at a rate of 5 percent a year as demand for alternative tuna sources continues to increase in Europe.

Lourdes Fernandez, Visayas representative of the Mindanao Economic Development Council (Medco) said the government has not turned a deaf ear to the concerns of the tuna industry and would explore ways to protect it.

PUMPKIN, squash and cousins in the gourd family make for interesting centerpiece.

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chuin Bunal-Formoso

TUESDAY FOOD ● WEDNESDAY ZEST ● THURSDAY FOOD

STRAWBERRY Shortcake by Karen Young is moist yet nice and light.

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

Decorate your table with vegetables

KITCHEN RESCUE IS FINALLY BACK TO Q&A. IT'S been quite a while.

Before tackling the questions, I just have to share his new discovery of mine. I had a party a few weeks back and used an assortment of decorative squash, pumpkin and other gourd types as centerpieces for my tables. Obviously, they stole the show!

No one could believe they were not made of plastic! They were given to me by my friend Ben Pontemayor who, a few months ago, asked me if I thought planting decorative vegetables would be viable. Not so many moons later, he had the first crop of these gorgeous ornaments.

Next time you have flowers inside or when you set your table, get some of these. They make interesting subjects for hours of conversation, even among strangers! Call 0299938.

Sweet discoveries

Love the things you recommend and I utter your recommendations for desserts. I can cook but baking is just too much for me. Any suggestions and new discoveries?
MYLEEN

I sure do. Been meaning to do a list for a while due to many requests for a repeat of a column I did of my favorite things, which I think now point last year. Didn't have an imperative but, through, so I decided to put it off for when you asked for it. Here it is.

Just looking at the photos of these new cakes, we already gained four pounds. But who cares? They are worth it!

Chef Alfi Serafico's Pistachio Sunsvival —Beyond words! The best conceived event for viewing, where it is perfectly executed from the meringue to the butter cream filling which spreads generously and is evenly through each layer. But I expect no less from the queen of perfection. Every one in place, just as God planned! Call 7217032.

Karen Young's Strawberry Shortcake— Again, she hasn't been tested in recent years. The cake so moist, yet nice and light that it melts in your mouth while the strawberries have just a hint of tartness that perfectly complements the lightly sweetened whipped cream. Karen's banana cream pie and mint carrot muffins are yummy, too! Call 8902888 or 9982288.

Monterey's Lamb Barbecue—If you have not tried this you are missing half of your life. If you love lamb, and even if you don't, you must try this! The honey-glazed lamb shoulder chops are so, so good, too. All you have to do is go to Monterey, buy and grill! Or more!

Justine Ilao-Ilao by Jess—I no piece with her (be-cussing)! Call 7395225.

Birthday surprise

It has been my practice to read your columns on Thursdays since I always anticipate your recipes and edge them.

I would like to request for the following recipes:

- Special delicious hamburger, which is quick to make
- Juicy and delicious steak marinade
- Bolognaise pasta or seafood pasta with olive oil no butter

It will be a surprise for my boyfriend's birthday this April 16. Thank you for your time and effort.

Very truly yours,
PINK PRINCESS

Oh, here! Look at what you do!
Pink Princess, I have not received a

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DINING OUT

Graduation day treat

KIMPURA Japanese Restaurant offers "Grads to Graduates." For a minimum food bill of P2,000++, diners will get a platter of gyoza (Japanese dumplings), hand fans (branded crab miso) and ice cream (ube-keso ice cream), complimentary at the house. The promo is available until April 15. Open daily for lunch and dinner, Kimpura is on the second level of Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati (tel. 8810267; 8168213) and Greenhills Shopping Center, San Juan (tel. 7218816; 7218815).

THE RICHMONDE GRILL offers buffet lunch consisting of soups, salads, appetizers, hot items and desserts. Cold items—selections include prawns, crabs, oysters and mussels, as well as a variety of sushi and sashimi. Lunch buffet is served 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m., Sunday–Friday. Diners who will opt for the buffet get a complimentary glass of beer, iced tea or soft drink. Download "Three for Two" coupons from www.richmondehotel.com and present them at the Grill. Groups of four that will avail of the lunch buffet pay for only three. Offer is valid until May 31. For RSVP, call 6387777 local 3401 or 6898419.

CORAL Garden's jadeite with Chicken Salad

GHASTY'S offers for this Lenten season the Captain's Choice Platter, fish fillet coated with Ghastyo's secret breading. It is served with Calamari Crunch and Belgian fries. The platter also comes with Ghastyo's Original Thin Crust Pizza. Call 7717771.

COOKING CLASSES

Crab, chicken & meat cooking

THE CULINARY ARTISAN SCHOOL OF CULINARY Arts offers the following classes: March 13: Grilled "T" (all time)—Crab Bisque with Rice Tuiles, Tempura of Soft Shell Crab Salad, Tom Yum Gung Soy Fry Crabs in Pepper Sauce, Indian Crabs, Garlic Crab Roast, Soft Shell Chili Crab.

March 14: Enticing Ways with Chicken (all new!)—Appetizer of Chicken Cheesecake with Cranberries, Stuffed Barbecued Chicken with Spicy Pineapple Barbecue Sauce, Apple Curry Chicken, Chicken with Truffle Risotto, Cantonese Chicken with Pumpkin Siomai.

March 15: Red Meats Grill (new!)—Home-smoked Beef Carpaccio with Balsamic Glaze and Sweet Ginger Puree, Delicious Beef and Tuna with Raw Pinot Gris-Red Rock and Preserve with Cheese of Four Colors (Gorgonzola, Whole Leg of Lamb Buffet with Mint Sauces and Red Side Dishes, 24 Hour on-the-Ice Lamb Barbecue, soup and salad.

March 20: Stylized Pinoy Comfort Food (all new!)—Chicken Shine "Chicharon" Marinated in Shrimp Paste, Beef, Pork and Chicken Sinigang sa Bayabas, Binapalit at Binagang Hipon Sa Gata, Sweet Spicy and Calamansi Roast Chicken in stylized version of Inasal; Bamboo with Homemade Noodles and Pinoy Pata Tim with Quenpao, Crispy Pork Binak with Savory Chocolate Sinigan with Green Sinigang. Call 9269296 or 9273008.

Hands-on cooking for youngsters

Dorothy's Cooking School will hold hands-on baking and cooking classes for children 10 years old and above with the following themes: cupcakes to bake and decorate; cake pops; cookies from the cookie jar; no-bake delights; asian pleasures; and a taste of Italy. Six sessions and adults, cooking, baking and cake decorating classes are offered such as the many ways to treat a chicken (beyond the usual ways and adventure); asian (ala) desserts and many more. Call 7217795, 4819960 or 7217740. The school is owned by culinary expert and cookbook author Dorothy Ferreria and is located in Pio Matias, QC.

Summer cooking for kids & teens

Maya Kitchen will hold the two-day Junior Culinary Workshop, 9 a.m.–12 nn, April 11-12. Kids 6-14 years old will be taught easy to prepare recipes. Fun activities are included in the sessions. Six teens 13 years old and up, Maya offers Young Graphics Cook-it, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., April 24, 26, 28. Participants will learn to be comfortable in the kitchen and gain multi-culinary skills. Hands-on classes will focus on diverse menus, techniques and creative presentations. Maya Kitchen is at G/F Liberty Bldg., 6, Arnaiz ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati. Call 8921105 or 8926511 local 108; e-mail ask-forbes@edmonsur.info.www.ph.

HOT your-tee-oh-ella-and cornbread, this one is made with pistachio nuts by JB Santiago.

Decorate . . .

By Penelope G.

boyfriend request for quite some time, so here it is. I hope it makes Miss Prince happy and may you still be serving me 12 years from now with the same desire to cook, hopefully, for the same man!

Burger

This is one of my favorite burger recipes. Not only is it tasty, it's delicious, too!

1 lb ground beef (75 percent lean, 30 percent fat)
2 tbsp garlic powder
2 tbsp onion juice (minced then strained, ground onion or 1 tbsp onion powder)
2 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
2 tbsp Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce

With gloves, combine ingredients and mix well until thoroughly blended.

The mixture should come to form a ball. It should be somewhat pasty. Form into patties.

Steak Marinade

I don't marinate my steaks, especially when they are of good quality. I just put salt and pepper right before grilling. Instead of a marinade, I suggest a good steak sauce and this is one of my favorites:

Blend Sauce:
¼ cup ketchup
1/3 cup soy sauce
1/3 cup mustard
1/3 cup onions, chopped
2 tbsp minced garlic
¼ cup soya, chopped
1 tbsp molasses
1 tbsp Worcestershire Sauce
1 cup honey
¼ cup brown sugar, or to taste
1/3–½ cup sugar
1/3 cup cane juice, optional
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup wine vinegar
1 cup water
Chili or jalapeño pepper to taste

Sauté onions, carrots and garlic in olive oil. Add the rest of the ingredients in saucepan, bring to a boil then simmer until thick.

Adjust salt, pepper, sugar and chili flakes to taste. Serve with grilled steak.

If he does not end up loving you more, someone else will! Happy birthday to the Prince! Your pasta recipe next week...

E-mail the author at penelope@inquirer.com.ph.

Clean water is not just for drinking

EVERYBODY KNOWS DRINKING water should be clean and safe, as many diseases can be spread by contaminated water.

But while people are aware of the need to drink clean water, they sometimes fail to realize that even the water they use for other things, like hand washing, should also be clean.

Good hygiene means clean water everywhere and not.

Dr. Georgina Sussmilch, a dermatologist, says it defeats the purpose of washing the hands and face if the water used is contaminated.

"If the patient has acne and uses unclean water as a facial wash, secondary bacterial infection can occur aggravating the acne," said Sussmilch, a fellow of the Philippine Dermatological Society.

"People who already have skin problems or have sensitive skin must make sure to use only clean water," she said. "If a sensitive skin gets exposed to some allergens that may be contained in the water, inflammation can occur."

Clean water for healthy skin

Georgina says people with atopic dermatitis or who are predisposed to inflammation usually have itchy skin. "If they use dirty water, their lesions will be irritated (which can) cause secondary infection."

Open wounds caused by scratching can worsen the infection by allowing bacteria to enter the skin.

Georgina also cautions against the use of contaminated water in cleaning women's private parts as it might cause vaginosis, a vaginal infection.

Pregnant women have to be extra careful to use only safe water for drinking and cleansing purposes as their unborn child might suffer from the contamination.

But the more serious risks of infection, like gastroenteritis and hepatitis A, are commonly caused by unsafe drinking water.

Dr. Greg Sussmilch, obstetrician-gynecologist, says unsafe water may lead to infection that can cause multiple organ failure.

DR. Greg and Dr. Georgina Pictorials of the Cardinal Santos Hospitals Greenhills San Juan

Any deficiency or failure of an organ of the body can adversely affect a woman's pregnancy. It poses risks for both mother and baby, including the development of some abnormalities in the unborn child.

Risks for mother & child

He also notes that a pregnant woman who drinks contaminated water may develop an infection like typhoid fever. The medical problem can result in "dehydration and nutritional deficiency or acute malnutrition."

Greg stresses that pregnant women, the elderly, and children are at greater risk of contracting water-borne diseases.

E. coli (Escherichia coli) is one of the bacteria most commonly associated with intestinal problems. Water can be infected with E. coli resulting in diarrhea and stomach cramps. Other possible sources of E. coli contamination are undercooked beef and ice processed or raw milk.

Greg advises pregnant women "to make sure that you are taking clean, non-contaminated water because it is a first step in preventing unethical problems."

Another hazard that may come from water is lead poisoning. Water from pipes or that gets in contact with solders are at risk of lead contamination. Lead is transmitted through drinking water running through pipes in the household. Lead poisoning causes damage to brain, kidneys, and nervous system.

The Pasculdos believe that periodic testing of pipes in households and commercial establishments is very important. Testing, they stress, must be done on a regular basis to ensure the safety of water used by people.

Water testing lab

In an attempt to address these concerns, Qualibet (Quality is Better) Testing Laboratory was set up. Founded by chemist Vitaly Tobiano, the laboratory aims to provide every Filipino with clean water.

Qualibet tests the quality of water in residential and other areas, as well as in hospitals. Tobiano says her profession is pursued as an advocacy due to sometimes overlooked by (indigent) people.

Through operating for only eight months, Qualibet has already gained the trust of government agencies. It has been accredited by and is working closely with the Department of Health, Trade and Industry, and Agriculture, and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Qualibet not only tests water quality but has also been tapped to test the quality of agricultural, marine, and other animal products.

CONTAMINATED water poses risks for both mother and baby

A recent test done by Qualibet found that waters in some subdivisions in urban areas were seriously infected with disease-causing bacteria.

Tobiano wanted her advocacy to clean waters and established Qualibet after overcoming cancer of the thyroid three years ago.

Qualibet is a member of the American Association of Analytical Chemists. It has already gained its ISO 9000 certification in less than a year of operation. Marites R. Tubayan

Have It Tested.

How **safe** are your bottled water for drinking and your tap water for washing or bathing your baby? Does it cause stomach ache, diarrhea and skin irritations? Call Gigi or Hope at 0917-8660711 or 0915-6426668 for additional information. Just let us know if you would like to have your water samples picked up for testing. Learn more about how products are analyzed using our stringent laboratory tests.
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IN THIS ISSUE
Bananarama /D2

LIFESTYLE

A kitchen destination

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Pesto

IF I WERE TO CONDUCT a food tour, I would certainly take my group to Roxas City, in particular to Neneng Alonzo' country kitchen.

There are no doors in her kitchen and the windows have no shutters; the circulates efficiently, a quality that all kitchens should have. Countertops are of white tiles. What sits on top are some of the pickles from the pendant of the land—the crux of a kind of kare (kilawin), coconut pith (ubod) and banana heart (puso ng saging). And there are big glass jars on wall that hold eggs of fishes that in time will become salted and fish sike or bitto for the regions favorite hors.

KITCHEN D4

WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS

GARY VALENCIANO

Do you have a hard-to-feed child?

PediaSure circle of SURE MOMS

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70 Abbott

F. STELLA

Some works of art are truly moving.

BMW Art Cars on tour | 20.06.07-03.31.07 | AYALA MUSEUM, MAKATI CITY, PHILIPPINES

BMW on Car by Frank Stella

Motorsport by BMW

PUT egg whites in a clean, grease-free bowl and beat until stiffy.

GRADUALLY whisk in flour. Beat again.

ADD wheat flour. Beat again until the mixture turns into a soft, glossy meringue.

TO PREPARE the filling, top sliced bananas with red bean paste. Then, heat oil in frying pan.

USING your hands, coat banana with a scoop of meringue and form into a snowball.

CAREFULLY drop balls into pan. Fry until light brown, stirring constantly.

Go bananas over a simple snack

Text by Margie Bugia-Reyes
Photos by Rudy Espino

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING different for snack that you can easily do at home? Here is a quick, simple merienda that you can do almost with your eyes closed.

This filling and budget-friendly snack may go well with a good cup of coffee or tea, or even ice cold milk.

The deep-fried soufflé balls with banana and red bean inside is a one of the popular desserts of Peking Garden (G/F, Glorietta 2, Ayala Center, Makati City tel. 8170666).

The sugary golden-colored soft balls have a sweet, fruity filling. Banana and red bean paste are encased in a puffy meringue of egg white then fried. The balls are served sprinkled with white sugar.

Chinese chef Danny Ho says the first step in making the soufflé balls is to stiffy whisked egg white and flour. The banana filling is coated with this meringue mixture and snowballs are formed then deep-fried. The balls are cooked over a frying pan with medium heat and then low heat.

As you bring the deep-fried soufflé ball out of the frying pan, quickly dust the top with sugar. Set on a serving plate and serve instantly.

Step By Step

SCOOP up and drain. Transfer to a serving plate.

SPRINKLE with white sugar.

DEEP-FRIED Soufflé Balls with fried banana and banana

The balls are so easy to make but truly satisfying and delicious.

The red bean is available in most supermarkets and Chinese food shops. To prepare the paste, put the red beans and water into a bowl. Bring to a boil, lower to cook over a low heat for an hour, or until the red beans turn soft, and all water has been absorbed. Remove from the heat and leave to cool, then crush into paste.

Ingredients:

- 50g plain flour, sifted
- 100g wheat flour, sifted
- 1/2 pc whole egg
- Sugar for dusting
- For the filling:
- Red bean paste
- 6 pc banana (ukoy), peeled and cut into 1-in flash rounds

For suggestions, e-mail the author at eha.gad@inquirer.com.ph

CHINA'S TOP TELEVISION CULINARY SHOW FEATURES RP DELICACIES

The Department of Tourism's Project Kultura is the main feature this month in China's top television culinary show "Eating with Mr. Ma," hosted by China's renowned TV personality Ma Wei (left from left). A film crew was in the country for an eight-day food trip. Among the places they visited were Via Mare, Tapsilog's Bonny's Garden, Kat's Casa Cecilia and Tapsilog Kamayan sa Pinoydom. Also in photo are Ryan Sebastian of DOT Project Kultura; Dada Nicolas, operations manager of Via Mare Group; and Gigi Lucasang, Team China member.

The Consumer

March is the month for women and consumers

By Linda B. Bolilo

SIGNIFICANCE: FDA AN EVENT that concerns almost the whole Philippine population. World Consumer Rights Day on March 15 passed unnoticed.

This is probably why several years after the country passed the Consumer Act of the Philippines, many Filipinos are still unaware of their rights.

The law not related contracts and redresses on warranties and development with to protect consumers' rights and establish standards of conduct for business and industry.

Among others, consumers have the right to get the facts to be able to make informed choices, to select from a range of goods and services, and to be protected against hazards to health or life.

But these rights are useless if consumers do not know about them or, worse, choose not to exercise them. They have to assert their rights and be constantly vigilant.

March is also women's month, and women—as wives and mothers—often have to make the critical consumer decisions that can advance or hinder the cause of sustainable development, environmental protection, and health promotion and protection.

Cecile Verdeflor of Consumer Task Force on Plastics has come up with suggestions on how women, particularly mothers, can exercise their consumer rights and make choices that will ensure the health and safety of both their families and the environment.

Here are practical steps that women may take:

1. Reduce consumption. Resources are limited. As consumers, women should ask themselves whether they need something or simply want it.

2. Read the labels. Get information on the ingredients or substances used. Read product warnings carefully. Check expiration date, efficiency, durability, etc.

3. Be cautious. Be wary of products with contents of substances and sound's chemicals. Even some cosmetic and hygiene products contain hazardous chemicals.

4. Do research. This will lessen the risk of being exposed to unwanted chemicals/hazardous substances.

5. Eat fresh. Consume less canned, processed food, shake from preservatives, cooks products from consumer contaminated chemicals. Avoid eating meat-removed meals as much as you can.

6. Patronize products that are reparable, reusable and recyclable.

7. Reuse that bag! Bring your reusable bags when shopping or have groceries placed in a box instead of plastic bags.

Not 'mamang'

Reader Nicole F. Hughes wrote to express her concern that the reinstituted fish moratorium, which some restaurants had already banished from their menus, might be sold in supermarkets.

"In Navotas's (municipal) 3, I saw several packages of fish labeled only as 'Fish Fillet.' When I asked the clerk what the fish was, she said she didn't know.

"Later, I was buying some frozen fish in Robinsons Malolos and again I saw the innocent-looking label 'Fish Fillet.' This time, the clerk whom I asked readily answered: mamang when I asked what 'fish' it was. When I expressed surprise... she immediately backed off and said she wasn't sure because the supplier wasn't sure about the fish's identity either."

We passed on Hughes' concern to the establishments she mentioned and got the following replies:

From Edgar Fernandez, Fresh division manager, Metro's and Hapmart:

"Metro's and Hapmart don't sell mamang fish. The supermarket, when it is big, hasn't an identity resemblance to the mamang fish. As a matter of company policy, we do not carry endangered species."

From Jody Godfa of Robinsons Supermarket chain (RSC):

"RSC does not sell mamang. This is an endangered species and we are fully aware of this. What we sell as fish fillet is pampa fish."

We hope these answers reassure Hughes.

Low-fat party

IF YOUR FRIENDS ARE calorie-conscious, why not throw a "Fit and Fab" party with these special recipes from Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog?

The only low fat hotdog in the market to date, Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog is 96 per cent fat free.

MAGNOLIA Low Fat Chickendog Chicken Carbonara with Spinach and Basil

Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog Chicken Carbonara with Spinach and Basil

Ingredients:
350 g linguine noodles
1 tbsp Magnolia Solid Life
4-5 cloves garlic, minced
1 pc medium-sized onion, minced
6 pc Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog, sliced into ¼-in length
1 small can button mushrooms, sliced
2 x 180gm Low Fat Milk
1 pc hotdog ham, cut into cubes
20 pc spinach leaves, cut into strips (chiffonade)
8 pc basil leaves, cut into strips (chiffonade)
Italian seasoning
salt
pepper
parmesan cheese, shaved

Procedure:
Prepare pasta according to package directions. Melt Magnolia Solid Life in a pan. Sauté garlic and onion. Add Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog and mushrooms and cook over medium heat until tender. Add the hotdog ham until golden brown. Stir in milk and let it simmer for 2-3 minutes. Add the spinach and basil leaves for 1-2 minutes until leaves begin to wilt. Sprinkle Italian seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste. Pour the mixture on the cooked pasta and add parmesan. Serve hot. Makes five servings.

*Calorie per serving: 220 cal.
*Serving size: about ½ cup

MAGNOLIA Low Fat Chickendog Frittata

Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog Frittata

Ingredients:
1 tsp olive oil
1 pc medium-sized white onion, chopped
200g Magnolia Low Fat Chickendog, sliced into ¼-in length
1 pc medium-sized carrot, cubed and boiled
1 pc potato, cubed and boiled
1 pc small-sized green pepper, cut in squares
300g cooked peas
4 pc eggwhites, scrambled
2 pc whole eggs, scrambled
½ tbsp salt
½ cup fine black pepper

Procedure:
Sauté onions in olive oil. Add sliced Magnolia Low Fat Chicken Hotdog, carrots, potatoes and green pepper. Sauté until cooked. Add the peas and continue cooking. Pour in the scrambled eggs evenly to coat the mixture so that it will come out like a cake. Cook through. Slice into wedges. Serve hot. Makes three servings.

*Serving size: about 1/3 cup
*Calories per serving: 340 cal

DLD Swiss Inn gourmet spreads fine preparation for home guests, meetings and receptions.

A party of Swiss delights

DLD Swiss Inn's growing catering business is a mixture of great food and elegant design.

THE OLD SWISS INN OFFERS local diners not just authentic Swiss dishes but other products that have made Switzerland famous like chocolate and cheese.

People can have exclusive dinners, luncheon and cocktail dessert whipped up with Swiss chocolate Toblerone, like Cheesecake, Crèmbrulee and Brownie for their own family and office parties and events.

Through the Old Swiss Inn's catering service, these, as well as other favorites like the Pepper Steak Encrusted Beef Tenderloin, Grugi and turkey, lingue prime rib and rack of lamb roast can now be served during special occasions.

The Old Swiss Inn can customize its catering service according to a desired theme, collaborating with clients on the menu, decorations, service and entertainment. It can host a variety of occasions, from a simple business lunch to live in seminars.

Old Swiss Inn is at The Garden Plaza Hotel and Suites, 1109 Belen St., Paco, Manila (tel. 521.3992, 5212739, 5224851 loc. 1131, 0/F Rotunda Olympia, Makati Avenue cor. Sen Gil Puyat St., Makati City, 8186261, 8186068, 8122101 loc. 571 to 572); and 2/F BMW Autocenter Lounge, Commerce Avenue cor. Madrigal Avenue, Ayala Alabang 8809260).

The place for the business class

CHATEAU 1771, THE restaurant with the French-inspired architecture, has become a favorite retreat for business executives from the towering steel and chrome edifices of the Ortigas Center.

Clients do not just go to the restaurant for meals but also hold business meetings, corporate presentations and even mini-conferences there.

Banco de Oro's assistant vice president Carlo E. Bija says the bi business meetings at Chateau 1771 convert to quiet and near bar-office.

Noel Cuyno, general manager of All Tech Biotechnology Corp., says the restaurant's good food and superb service help create successful meetings.

Jesus Guevarra II, executive vice president of the Development Bank of the Philippines, says the food at Chateau 1771 is cooked gourmet style and plated memorably.

Equitable PCI Bank vice president Antonio Tee-Chua says the bank's lounge guest have been impressed, proving that the restaurant's menu has an international appeal, catering to both Asian and European tastes.

Vicente de Villa III, director at the Central Bank of the Philippines, appreciates the special attention given to him at the restaurant.

Michael G. Wells, vice president of Aztec Power, says the staff always greets him by name that he feels he is among friends when he is at the restaurant.

Chateau 1771 has built a reputation for "No Reservation" cuisine prepared in the time-honored French way of cooking.

Service at Chateau 1771 is characterized by a careful attention to even the minutest detail, which elicits appreciation.

Chateau 1771 is open 7 a.m. 11 p.m., Monday-Thursday, and 7 a.m.-1 a.m., Friday-Saturday. On Sundays, the restaurant is reserved for exclusive functions and special occasions.

Chateau 1771 (reservations, 6317748 to 49, banquet services, 6317550) is at 52 Pacific Real de Manila, ADB Ave. Julia Vargas avenues, Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

THE airy, spacious country kitchen of Bonnie Alcaraz with its wood-fire brick ovens

PUSO cooked in nipa sake

A kitchen destination

From page D1

The best appetizer is seeing what you are about to have, like skewered native chicken and oysters gleaming in their shells

Rustic

Sticks to round out rules dominate the kitchen, accentuating the rustic ambience. The bricks hold in the heat of the oven and the stoves, battered by wood. The cooks know just when to reduce the fire to embers for that important phase of slow-cooking as well as when to add some more fuel for that quick sizzle. And, Bonnie says, they do prefer cooking with wood because food cooks faster.

Still, there are modern enjoyments in the place. A blender, a coffee maker...a roomy kitchen can keep up with the times, too.

All around you are touches of Bonnie's interior design, in one wall, several huge cooking pans (shelves), unused) are hung, all showing signs of being seasoned from cooking for big feasts. On another wall are wooden spatulas and forks and, in a far corner, another set of local assistants are hung.

We arrived at midmorning from Iloilo, early enough to have the breakfast Bonnie prepared and to see our lunch being cooked.

The best appetizer is seeing what you are about to have. Several native chicken still skewered on spits were resting after being roasted in the oven. Oysters were gleaming in their shells and it was tempting to take one right away, taste the sea in our gulp. But our host said we should have some context first.

The context was called sinuba manok. Bonnie said it looked like tumba-tumba, a caterpillar's puppa. It was sooner that native like tamales: the only that white portion of pure rice flour. We were offered think chocolate and beaten cold the hot over came from Mong, an and Lobsters in Iloilo.

Garden dining

Our dining room for all our eating was going to be a gazebo right across the kitchen. It had windows all around with window seats. You could inhale the cool air and look out to the fish ponds. If you were dining, you could privately in room where the stairs and the walls are made of bamboo.

Th best all I name of the breakfast before the lunch, we arrived the place. We went to another dining area in the latest new the main house. One pot outside had bbm, a leaf used for steaming meat added at the last minute so for the meat would not soak. On the sides of the fishponds, there were patapoy leaves that were later used to cooked with (coconut milk (gata) and some dried shrimps (bibi). On the grill were packets of banana leaves holding some call fruits. This way of cooking is called *binon-anan*, grilling in packets that will allow the ingredient to cook in its own steam, whether tuff beans, chicken soup or fish cooked.

Back in the kitchen, more dishes were being prepared. There was bagnigan, black-long shells, that were being washed and would later be cooked in coconut milk and ginger. Inasay and puso sa saging were going to be part of the feast, vegetables cooked in water flavored with chorizo beef links. Pig (ating ong) was cooking in chicken; also with coconut milk and ginger.

On a kawali were two ducks simmering in a juice that female said was take as sipa or the oddly expressed from sipa palm. Used early enough before the toddy ferments into vinegar or even inside into the food vendors (tuba beng), the toddy is syrupy sweet. It was used to cook a soup of glutinous rice called buenbuen, and rice cooked in coconut leaves shaped like boats called puad. A separate container for the tuba or sipa was nearby to use the diner wanted more of that sweetness.

These dishes were our lunch and dinner, more than enough to feed 20 people.

Next day we woke up early to reach the fish market where we looked for a specialty that seemed to be getting rare. It's smoky, smoked big shrimps skewered in bamboo sticks. Alas, we couldn't find any, every vendor saying that there had been many but they don't have it anymore. We consoled ourselves with buying small shrimps, alive and jumping. These would go straight to the kitchen, sprinkled with fruit then deep-fried. That was our breakfast, well, just a part of it, as you can imagine, given how much food we had the day before.

My second visit to Roxas City would add to the food encounters I have of this place. My favorite dish during the first visit was a bowl of unhatched chicken eggs swimming in broth. That kept me from the whole lunch trying to calculate how many more I had to make that dish.

But make no mistake, there is much more to be had in the place. Roxas City, after all, is the seafood capitals of the country.

Email the author at jalvaydon@yahoo.com

BATA-BATA is rice cooked with tuba or sipa.

PAGE cooking runs under the walls.

PATTYE chicken barbecue

Trendy Filipino food ideas

THE PHILIPPINES IS ENCOURAGING to build a reputation for new and innovative food products with distinctive packaging designs and responding to the different lifestyles of today's consumers.

Filipino manufacturers have invested time and money in developing new food ideas and improving the quality of existing food products to be more competitive in the world market.

One example of trendy Filipino food is the easy to prepare Amorsolo Puso by cagayanda's foodie Dorothea Bernard that comes like the only shrimp-and-(chorizo)rice porridge) but with the health benefits of oatmeal.

J.G. Gonzales' packed bamboo was modern packaging technology for greater convenience. People can enjoy the home-cooked taste of Pinangat Oano leaves stuffed with ground pork and shrimp) and Inubalan (rice leaves stuffed with crab meat and shredded coconut meat), among others, anytime, anywhere.

Goodwood International, Inc. has found a winner in its Mamonsito Dried Banana Chips. The old Filipino favorite snack was made healthier with the use of monounsaturated sugar.

Also innovative is Nestl Prime Puree/ Mangosteen Tea which, as the name implies, uses extracts of real mangosteen fruit for a healthy and refreshing drink.

Norwegian Food Enterprises' Lola Cooking Vinegar is perfect for salad dressing. Made from coconut water, making it truly unique, it comes in five variants: Classic, Tanduyan, Tanuyan and Coco Honey, from Wild Honey, and Chili and Ginger.

The food items were among the wares of the Trendy awards for outstanding Filipino food companies during previous staging of the International Food Exhibition (IFEX) Philippines.

Organized by the Philippine government's export promotions agency, Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), IFEX showcases the best from the Philippine food industry, including fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, packaged food, value-added marine products, specialties such as sauces and seasonings, confectionery, and snack products.

Most trendy Filipino food ideas and products will be shown at the IFEX Philippines 2007 May 19-20 at the World Trade Center, Manila. For more information, call CITEM, 832-1661or Christine at 832-1283, 832-1284 local 206 and 230; e-mail agfmarine@citem.com.ph, or visit www.ifex.philippines.com.

THOUSANDS of local and foreign buyers visit International Food Exhibition (IFEX) Philippines every year because of the quality food products that it showcases.

IFEX Philippines 2007, now on its fourth year as the government-led trade show for the food industry, aims to provide worldwide exposure of the Philippine food products, with this year's theme, "Filipino Food is a Global Delicacy."

LIFESTYLE

Japan's four seasons in one restaurant

Spring, summer, autumn and winter will be reflected in the new Century Tsukiji's menu

BEEP Tsukiba

Text by Yangie Bugo-Reyes
Photos by Rudi Reyes

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHY another Japanese restaurant named Tsukiji has opened at the Century Park Hotel in Manila, it is because founder Yusuke Kuniyama wants to make its authentic Japanese dishes, beyond sushi, sashimi and tempura, available to more Filipinos.

Tsukiji restaurant in the Milky Way building on Pasay Road, Makati, has established a loyal clientele with its Japanese cooking that uses the freshest catch of the day prepared the simplest and most natural way to showcase the very best of traditional Japanese cuisine with contemporary influences.

Now, Kuniyama has left Tsukiji-Makati in the capable hands of his Filipino partners to be settles in a new restaurant, The Century Tsukiji.

"We found a new home and a new partner," says Kuniyama. "We will be able to serve more of the delicious food cooked the traditional Japanese way that our customers love. We will also introduce exciting additions to the menu for a broader selection and a deeper appreciation of Japanese cuisine."

Formidable team

Kuniyama's wife, Mitsuy helped set up the new place while a formidable team of Japanese culinary experts—Seiji Kamura, teppanyaki chef; Shinji Furukawa, hot kitchen and tempura chef; and Tomoaki Sobe, sushi chef—supports him in the kitchen.

With the restaurant getting most of its ingredients from Japan, the menu of Century Tsukiji (pronounced skee-jee) reflects the country's four seasons—winter, spring, summer and autumn. Each season is marked by a distinct assortment of culinary delights.

The daily catch, for instance, varies in winter and summer, and different vegetables are harvested in spring and autumn. Gindara, for example, is abundant during the cold season while mackerel is bountiful during summer.

Executive sensei Century Tsukiji draws only the finest and freshest ingredients are used in preparing every item on the restaurant's menu. Most of the ingredients are flown daily from Tsukiji, reputedly one of the largest wholesale markets in Tokyo for fresh veggies, fruits, fish and other seafood as well as meats.

With Lucio Tan owning both Century Park Hotel and the Philippine Airlines, daily deliveries from Japan are assured.

Classic, all-season Century Tsukiji fell, Kamameshi (seasonal rice offerings are the Gindara Teriyaki, succulent and flaky grilled fish topped with a rich, sweet and tangy teriyaki sauce; Kani Salad, a concoction of crisp greens and crab fillet; Ebiten Kuiyaki, delectable fire-grilled scallops in butter and sake wine; Buggu Sukiyaki, a hot soup of Okinawa brand name derived from a place in Japan's best and assorted Japanese vegetables; and Wagyu Tataki, rare Obani beef with a savory ginger sauce.

Also not to be missed are the Jo Chirashi, a colorful main course with kinshi tamago (eggs), fresh vegetables, and sushi rice as main ingredients; Shokado Bento, a complete meal

BRIGHTLY colored interior is a perfect backdrop for typical Japanese wood furnishing and accents.

GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

A. LIPIN — By Ed Aberin

BABY BLUES — By Jerry Scott

PUGAD BABOY — By Pol Junior

NUTS — By Patrick McDonnell

LOVEHUNTS — By Elizabeth Echevarria

ATOMIC AND WEBBY — By Lira Garcellano

DIVINE COMEDY — By Steven Manlapaz

BIRD MACHINE — By Mahar Aberin

MAMBOBOKSOR — By Jomeo Tuzon

TULOOK — By Papi Lino Tatum Hilamblac

BEN — By Daniel Shelton

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Mel F. Stuchberg
Huntington Beach, CA

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

THIS WEEK TODAY: You're well-versed and often know what you want. Because of this, you're a natural leader. Others look to you for advice and follow up on the high ideals you have for yourself, which are often quite heroic. You find it easy to motivate an enthusiastic fan like Zoek cool-cat Luke Wilson. Comedian/actor Jonathan Ross and actress Michelle Rodriguez, actress Whitney Cummings, actor Matthew Modine, artist

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	8	9	6	3	1	2	7	4
3	1	7	9	4	2	5	6	8
6	4	2	7	5	8	3	1	9
8	5	4	3	1	9	6	2	7
9	7	6	5	2	4	1	8	3
2	3	1	8	7	6	4	9	5
7	6	3	1	9	5	8	4	2
4	9	8	2	6	3	7	5	1
1	2	5	4	8	7	9	3	6

Difficulty level ★★★

UNAGI
Kabayaki

KAISEKI Hassun (left) and Mixed Sashimi

Japan's four seasons in one restaurant

CHIKUZEN Tsukiyaki

From page B1

from appetizer to dessert and includes sashimi, tempura, and a filling dobi mushi soup, and selections of sushi and sashimi, like bluefin tuna, Spanish mackerel, mackerel, and Kuruma Ebi.

Aside from new additions to the menu, Century Tsukiji has adopted an exciting new look, spotlessly festive interiors. There is an interesting interplay of colors (black, white and yellow) and textures (wood and steel).

Hanging lamps help produce the authentic Japanese look. A large painting on one wall depicts the four seasons of Japan.

"We want our guests to also be at home in our new home. We welcome them and we want to serve them only the best in Japanese cuisine," says Minoy Katayama.

CENTURY Tsukiji's formidable culinary team: Shinji Furukawa, Yusuke Kasuyama, Minoy Katayama, Tomoaki Seiko and Seiji Konnara

Enter the intriguing world of culinary arts. Sneak into our kitchens and learn – a-ppetit-tizingly slow, mind-blowing, where thrifty and frantic ways highly trained to specialize as chefs in the corporate world.

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Baking-Pastry Arts & Technology Management (1 to 2 years)

For schedules of entrance exams and other details, please call 439-4849 and look for Ms. Agnes Manalaysay or Ms. Jovanly Cruz.

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A honey of a bread

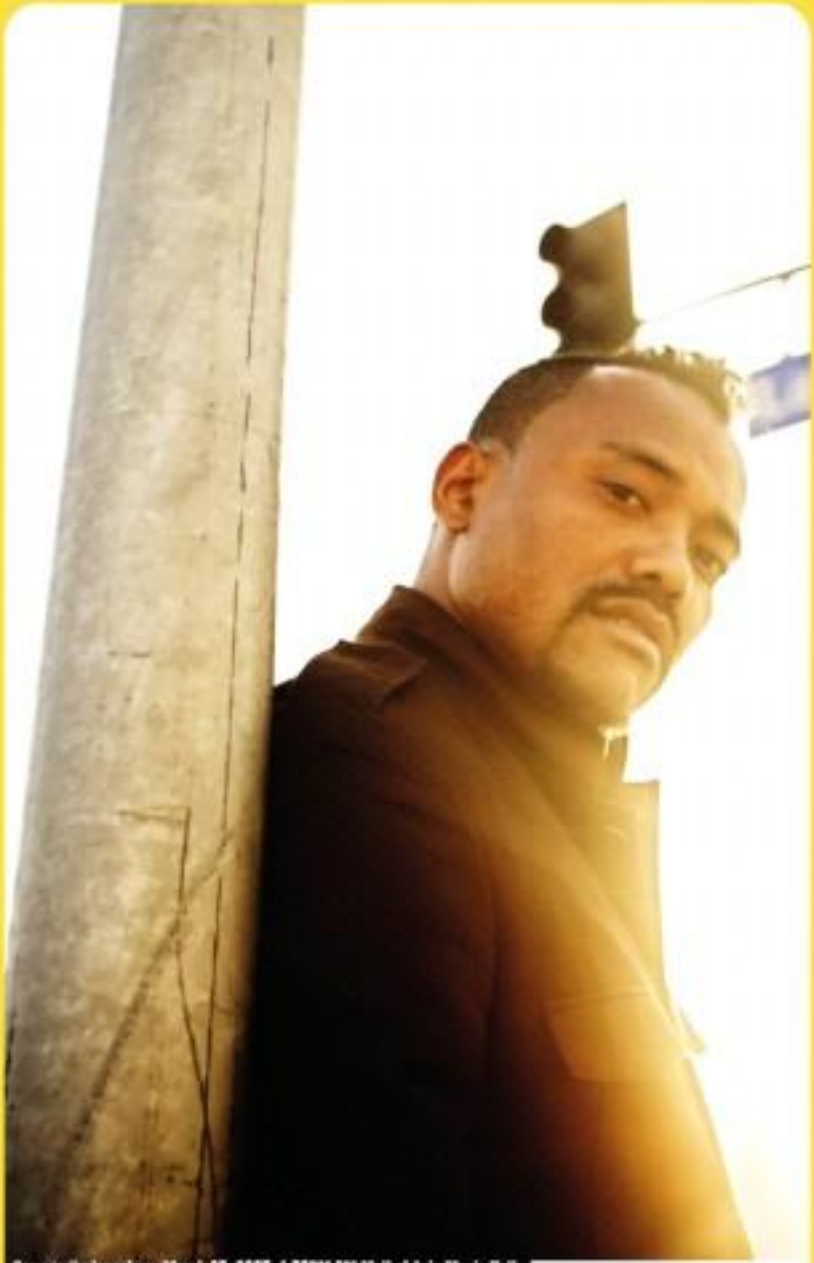
GARDENIA honey oat loaf, produced in partnership with Quaker Oats, combines the healthy goodness of honey and oats in one convenient and affordable product.

Honey has been reported to be high in antioxidants that fight disease causing free radicals. It has vitamins and minerals including niacin, riboflavin, pantothenic acid, calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and zinc.

Whole grains, like oats, have been found to help prevent heart and other chronic diseases. They are also excellent sources of fiber.

Barbie an item, pursues and interests herself, get Gardenia Honey Oat Loaf

PPL, MEET APL.



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ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bernie D. Velarde

A fun time as Fantine

By Rayvel San Diego Jr.

WRITING FROM NEW York, singer-actress Lea Salonga told Inquirer Entertainment via e-mail that her big Broadway homecoming last Feb. 22 was "quite uneventful."

"We were greeted by rain and cold weather," she recalled. "It only drew one more to it than that, for us."

But there her arrival coincided with her 36th birthday, she had the perfect excuse to party ... somewhat.

"We had dinner out with friends and family and it was nice," she recounted.

Apart from taking over the role of Fantine in "Les Misérables" (the first Asian to do so on Broadway), Lea's big Apple trip (her first since 2003) is made more memorable because she's with baby Nicole Beverly who's turning one on May 16.

"Playing a wonderful role in a great Broadway show and the baby are more than enough to make this visit special," she explained.

After showing rehearsals, she made her grand debut in Fantine on March 6. When she wraps up her summer here in the year, she'll move on to the Asian tour of "Cinderella," which kicks off in Manila in April 2008.

Lea is fond of "Cinderella" because it's a role originated by her idol, Julie Andrews, with whom she worked in a 1992 Hollywood Bowl recording of "The King and I."

"It's—for me, down-to-earth, humble, grounded, awesome," Lea enthused about Ella.

She didn't scrimp on praise either, when describing her "Les Mis" cast mates—particularly Filipino-Americans Jill Twohill and Adam Jacobs, who play her grown daughter Cosette and Cosette's partner Marius, respectively.

What was opening night like?

THE PINAY: Tony winner on the Broadway stage with the "Les Mis" ensemble

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Lea Salonga–first Asian to play the part on Broadway–tackles mom role offstage, too

It went quite well, I think. If my friends and family are to be believed, I did all right!

What about audience feedback?

So far, audiences have been wonderful. Standing ovation every night performance. The full audience icon in first seen—our Valjean (Alexander Gemignani) takes his bow.

What comes to your mind when you sang "I Dreamed a Dream" for the first time on Broadway?

Okay, let me preface this by saying that

A/Sun p3

WAS THAT for real? During the Express Awards over the weekend, hosts Heart Evangelista and Judy Ann Santos had a little on-cam moment over the word "pa," which the former used to address the latter. Judge snapped, "Oh kung ang sinasabi mo ... kung ito ang ano gamitin ng 'pa.'"

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11:30, 2:00, 4:30, 8:30, 11:30
R-21

HORROR
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CHEER FACTOR

SAN FRANCISCO—VIDEO GAMES WITH ACTION dictated by brain waves will be available by the end of the year, according to a Silicon Valley company that has created low-cost headsets. A mass demand as Dutch Valley demonstrated the NeuroSky in motion on Thursday at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco. "It's like the force," he said, referring to the film premise that unseen energy could be tapped and channeled by the mind. The credit actually goes to neurons that gauge people's moods by measuring brain wave emissions, according to NeuroSky spokesperson Greg Hyatt. "The technology has been around for a hundred years," Hyatt said. "The problem was the cost, and we fixed that." AFP

Not ready for his close-up

AUSTIN, TEXAS—As documentary filmmakers, Debbie Melnyk and Rick Crane looked up to Michael Moore.

Then the Toronto-based couple tried on the a documentary about him—and ran into the same sort of resistance Moore famously faces in his films.

The result is "Manufacturing Dissent," which turns the camera on the confrontational documentarian and examines some of his methods. The movie had its world premiere Saturday night at the South by Southwest film festival.

Melnyk and Crane, a husband-and-wife team, spent more than two years making the movie, which follows Moore on his college tour promoting 2004's "Fahrenheit 9/11." The film shows Melnyk repeatedly approaching Moore for an interview and being rejected; members of Moore's team also hitch the couple out of the audience at one of his speeches, saying they weren't allowed to be shooting there.

At his sarcastic persona, the filmmakers suspected pro-Moore planes in the audience holding or trying to otherwise sabotage the screening, but it turned out to be a ruse after.

"It went really well," Melnyk said. "People liked the film and laughed at the right spots and got the movie and we're really happy about it."

Moore hasn't commented on "Manufacturing Dissent," and Melnyk thinks he never will. But she was until dirty error still fans of Moore's movies. AP

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AT THE CINEMAS — THX

G1	1 THRIVING	2 HORROR	3 PROMENTION	4 ZOMBIES
G4	1 THRIVING	2 ALPHA DOG	3 300	
	4 BREAKING & ENTERING	5 RECLAIMED 1 HAND 300	6 HORROR	7 PROMENTION
GB1	1 300	2 HORROR		
GB3	1? 300	2? HORROR		
	3 BREAKING & ENTERING	4 DREAMGIRLS	5 THRIVING	
ATC	1? HORROR	2 THRIVING		
	3 300	4 ALPHA DOG	5 PROMENTION	
ACC	1 DREAMGIRLS	2 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	3 300	4 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
M2	1 HORROR	2 PROMENTION		
	3 MONEY W HONEY	4 ZOMBIES	5 THRIVING	

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'My mom's here (NY) with me and Nic, thank God! Talk about heroic'

A fun time . . .

From page F1

wherever I have to sing my solo number in a show, I get verbally pummeled. So, the only things going through my mind were the lyrics. Other than was cute, I learned a huge sigh of relief and went on with my track. It's getting easier, somehow, but I always rush through the lyrics in my dressing room before I head onstage.

What was it like interacting with Hi-fives Ali Sotelo and Adrian Avendaño and the rest of the "Let Me" cast?

Oh, Ali and Adrian are both great, and awfully talented! I was very pleased and proud to hear that they were in the show, and that they deserve to be. And they're both sweet as well. The rest of the company is a great bunch to work with. Talented and good people.

What were rehearsals like?

Rehearsals were by in a blur. I was given a week and a half to prepare, and then I was on. There was blocking for both my baritone and ensemble tracks, music rehearsals, staging, wherever. Add to that summer things, wig fittings and publicity. But thankfully I had many hands to guide me and lend me along to wherever I needed to go.

How did you prepare for Saoirse?

First off, I read the Bonnie passages in Elinor Hegyi's novel, just to get a grip on her character and circumstances. She is a staggering example of such adolescence. She is only 15 at the time of a number of the hostilities while she abandons her and their child. She leaves the child as he sits cowed by what she thinks are kindly people. She feels stuck in low-old hometown, gets lured, sells away, thing she owns—including her baby's teeth and finally her body. She goes from innocence to losing all shame. And I have to do all that in 20 minutes—thankfully without the "selling of the teeth" part.

Have you had time to watch other Broadway play?

Unfortunately, no. But because I was a guest speller on the hit Broadway show, "Spelling Bee," I got to see that one! It was so much fun. Jose Llana (my co-star in "Flower Drum Song") is in it, and he's wonderful!

How are you coping, juggling motherhood and Broadway?

My mother is here with me, thank God! She's doing a lot of the caretaking. I have asked her if the source additional help, but she's always refused. Talk about a heroic feat. Then again, given that it's my mom, I'm not surprised.

Have you taken Nicole backstage in "Les Mis"?

Nope, not yet. Once she's another's former OJ color face.

How has motherhood informed/redefined your work as theater actress?

I guess I'm just more reactive. I'm thinking less, and that's good. My boundaries are so much more now, and I'm now more prone to make a stronger choice because I'm going by my gut. If my choice is wrong, the director will let me know. At least, I make a choice.

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4 DEAD PEOPLE 2
5 300
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2 THE NUMBER 23
3 MONAY NI SHOLI
4 THE HITCHER
IMUS
1 MONAY NI SHOLI
2 TURISTAS
3 THE NUMBER 23
4 DEAD PEOPLE 2
5 PATHFINDER
STARMILLS
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2 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
3 MONAY NI SHOLI
4 300
5 THE HITCHER
6 DEAD PEOPLE 2
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